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Roads More Traveled

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A train attendant. by Wan Quan

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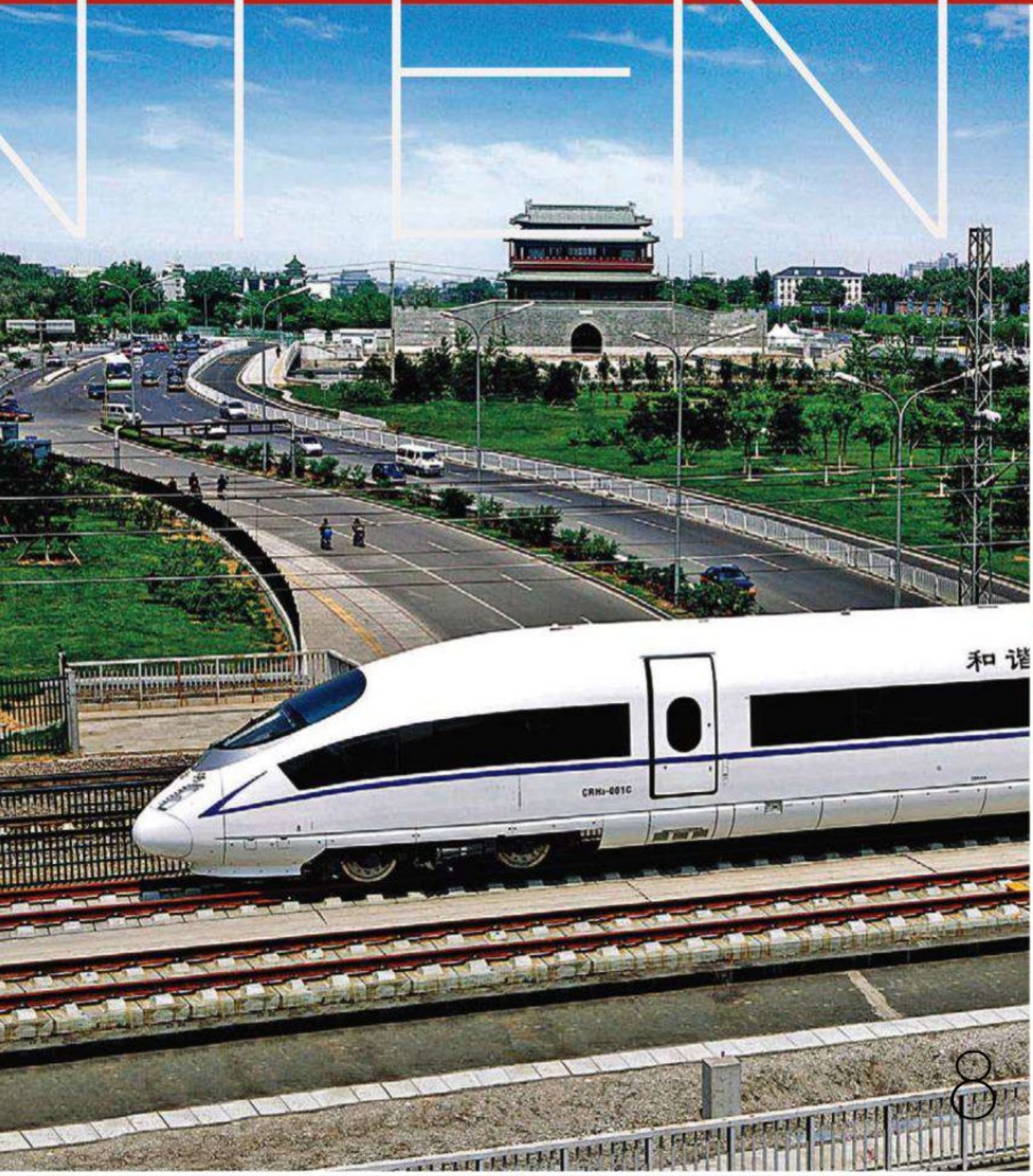
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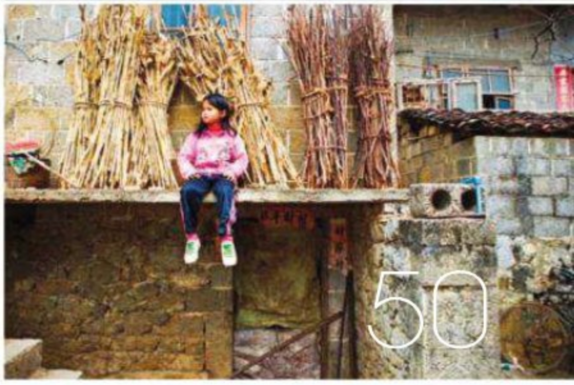

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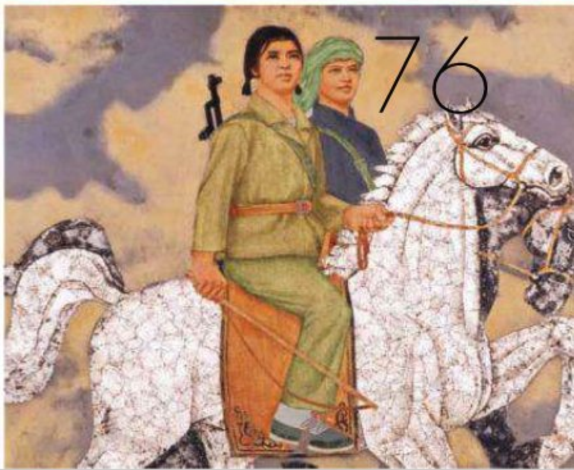

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Beijing
Hangzhou
Qiandao Lake

CHINA PICTORIAL

Travel Destination of the Month

Scuba at Qiandao Lake

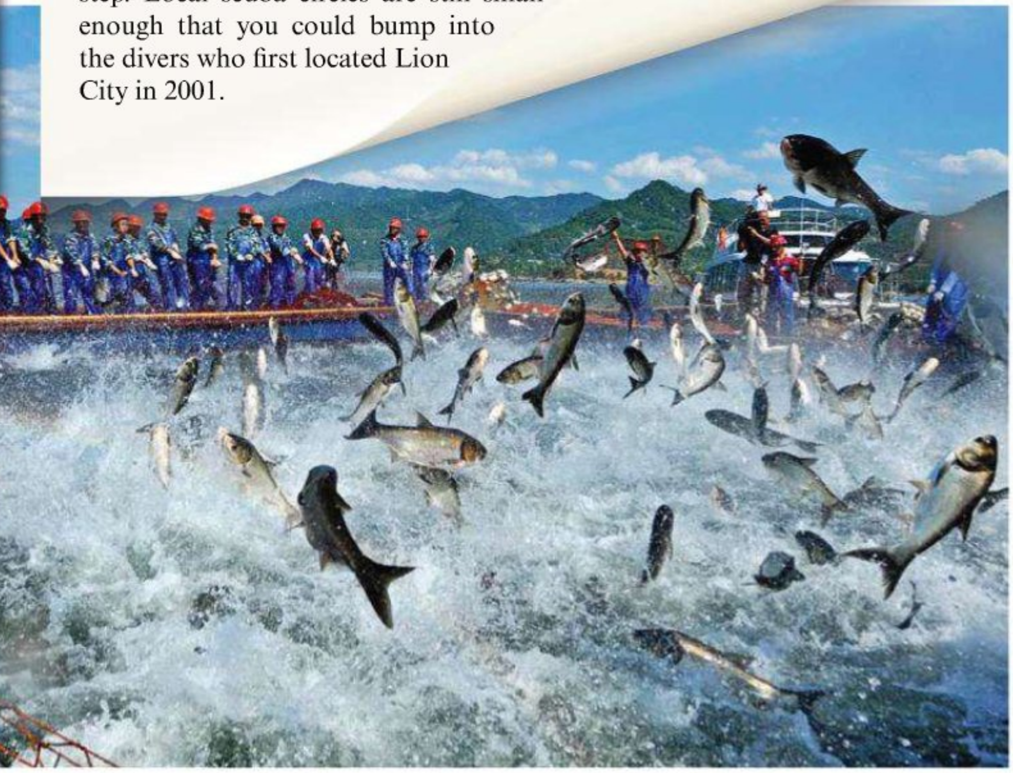
Certainly, Hainan Island at China's southernmost tip is the nation's most renowned location for scuba diving. Most eager first-timers would choose the tropical paradise by default. However, China's economic rise has meant rapidly increasing tourism demand, and the island is not yet ready to handle such heavy holiday traffic. So, a new diving destination emerged. With an abundance of fish and a stunning underwater eco-system that is rarely paralleled elsewhere on the planet, the new hotspot has proven suitable for both amateur and professional divers. Qiandao Lake's name literally translates to "lake of one thousand islands," and it can be found just outside of Hangzhou in Zhejiang Province.

In contrast to ocean diving, practicing scuba in lakes provides a special allure that is not easy for some to imagine. Since the lake's silt is extremely light, even gentle movements can stir up cloudy water, causing divers to lose visuals. Therefore, controlling buoyancy is more important than in the ocean. Water temperature can be another concern, and divers must make sure to keep warm during a dive. Deeper water can become considerably darker, so experienced divers know to bring lighting equipment along.

However, the extensive preparations are all worthwhile. After diving into Qiandao Lake, not only will the amazing waterscape be revealed, but visitors get the rare chance to explore ancient underwater cities. When a dam was built that created Qiandao Lake in 1959, local residents were evacuated. However, three ancient cities became forever submerged in water, creating a spectacular scene. Of the three cities, Lion City, which was constructed in the Tang (618-907) and flourished through the Ming (1368-1644) Dynasty, is the most famous.

For those interested in diving in Qiandao Lake, contacting a local guide is the best first step. Local scuba circles are still small enough that you could bump into the divers who first located Lion City in 2001.

Qiandao Lake at night. IC



Fishing with a huge net, a major performance during Qiandao Lake's cultural festival. CFP

Visa-upon-Landing

The Armenian government decided to remove China and India from a 2008 list which required invitations for Chinese and Indian nationals to acquire entry visas to the country.

The decision means that Chinese nationals can receive visas upon landing. Previously, only diplomats and service passport holders could enjoy visa-free travel to Armenia.

"Emperor Wood" Museum

China's first museum showcasing furniture and art constructed with the rare and expensive Phoebe sheareri wood, dubbed "emperor wood" in ancient China, recently opened its doors to the public in Beijing.

Phoebe sheareri is a rare tree native to southern Chinese regions. The wood's impressive resistance to decay and faint but pleasant fragrance caused it to be chosen as the main material for palaces, royal temples, and high-end furniture in ancient China.

Surpassing Japan

Japan confirmed on February 14 that China's economy surpassed its own as the world's second largest in 2010, noting that a late-year downturn was Japan's first quarterly contraction in more than a year.

Japan's real GDP expanded 3.9 percent in the calendar year marking its first annual growth in three years, but it wasn't enough to remain above surging China. Japan's nominal GDP last year measured US$5.4742 trillion, less than China's total of US$5.8786 trillion, the Cabinet Office reported.

Plant Fossils

Paleontologists in east China's Anhui Province have unearthed thousands of plant fossils which could date back to 600 million years ago, according to a spokesman for Xiuning County, where the fossils were found.

The county will apply to build a national geopark to protect the fossils and provide tourists a chance to learn about plants that evolved hundreds of millions of years before dinosaurs.

Shanghai Cadillac Recall

Shanghai General Motors Co. will recall 2,806 Cadillac CTS vehicles imported to China to repair faulty track bars to ensure safety, China's quality watchdog reported on February 14.

The recall, which is set to begin on March 21, covers models that were produced between June 16, 2008, and April 20, 2009. The company will repair or replace the rear suspension track bars of affected vehicles.

Berlinale Screening

Famous Chinese director Zhang Yimou's latest film *Under the Hawthorn Tree* was screened on February 12 for audiences at the Berlin Film Festival.

The film depicts a love story between Jing Qiu and Lao San, two young lovers coming of age during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). Stars of the film, Shawn Dou (Lao San) and Zhou Dongyu (Jing Qiu), attended opening night in Berlin.

A still from Under the Hawthorn Tree.

Excited tourists in Tian'anmen Square, Beijing. IC

Beijing's First Snow

Snow finally fell in Beijing on February 9 night and continued into the next morning, the city's latest first winter snow in 60 years. Previously, the city saw no rain or snow for 108 consecutive winter days.

Excited Beijing residents who stayed up late to see the first flakes were blogging about it that night.

Spring Festival Tourism Boom

China's tourism authorities recently announced that tourism boomed in the country during the seven-day Lunar New Year holiday with 70 percent of trips occurring within the Chinese mainland.

"According to data from bureaus of major domestic tourist destinations, during the first five days alone, the trip count was already considerably higher than in years past," remarked an official with the National Holiday Tourism Office.

Celebrating Spring Festival. by Fang Shuo

Chongqing Public Housing

The southwestern city of Chongqing's ambitious public rental housing project began accepting applications February 12, becoming the first major Chinese city to begin a public housing project on such a large scale.

Under the city government's plan, the project will build 40 million square meters of apartment buildings in the next three years to house 2 million low and mid-income residents who live in Chongqing's urban center but do not own homes and who currently live in extremely small dwellings.

Gong Chuanxiong, a 24-year-old worker, holds the application form for the public apartment in Chongqing. by ***Yang Lei/Xinhua***

Child Beggars Fund

A special fund to provide long-term aid for the nationwide crackdown on child begging will emerge in the near future.

Yang Peng, secretary-general of the Shenzhen-based One Foundation, announced on his micro blog on February 12 that a dedicated fund will be established and affiliated with the charitable organization.

The fund will primarily help former child beggars return to school, offer support for communities that receive the children, and provide basic financial support for volunteers participating in the campaign.

Blood samples collected at a city aid center in Shijiazhuang, Hebei Province, during a campaign to aid child beggars. The blood sample will be used for a DNA test that could help return abducted children to their families. ***IC***

Dunhuang Dreams

During Spring Festival, Lanzhou municipal government organized 10 free performances of the dance drama *Dunhuang My Dream* for local residents, including many civil servants such as police officers, medical employees, and sanitation workers, as well as for families receiving minimum social welfare support.

The dance drama has been running for more than 10 years, with more than 800 performances both at home and abroad, becoming a classic exhibiting Dunhuang art and traditional Chinese culture.

Actresses perform during the dance drama Dunhuang My Dream *in Lanzhou. by* ***Jia Xiaoyun/Xinhua***

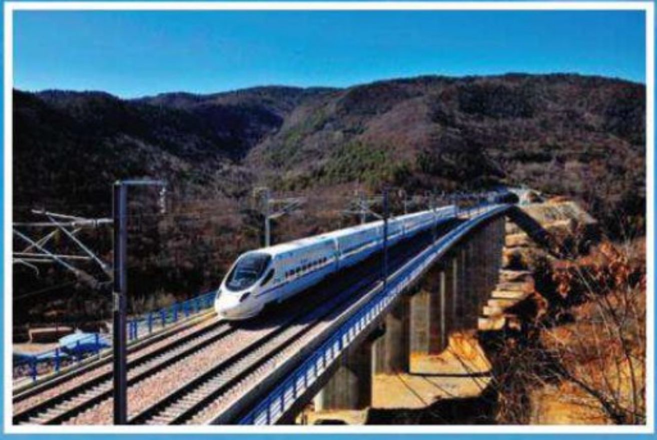
Speed Revolution

Text by Tang Tao

Li Zhiqun, who moved to Beijing for better employment, can now visit his home in Tianjin's Nankai District more often, thanks to the country's first high-speed rail, the Beijing-Tianjin Intercity Railway, which began operation in 2008.

Before then, he had to take a bus between the two cities, which normally took at least two hours each way. That is without traffic jams, which became increasingly frequent along highways connecting the two metropolises and would cause his trip to take much longer. "At that time, I went back home two or three times a month," Li recalls. "The trip was a bit tough. Sometimes I had to work late on Friday evenings, and when I got off, the intercity buses weren't running. If I was lucky, I could catch the 9 o'clock train, so I could arrive home around 11 p.m. or midnight."

Currently, 70 pairs of trains run daily along the Beijing-Tianjin Intercity Railway, and the number may in-



April 1, 2009: The 189-kilometer Shijiazhuang-Taiyuan Passenger Railway begins operation, with a designed speed of 250 kilometers per hour. by Zhang Kunrui

crease to 100 to meet surging demands during holidays. On average, a train departs from Beijing to Tianjin every 15 minutes, and cuts one-way travel time between the cities to only 30 minutes. "Now, I can go home at least twice a week," Li smiles. "It is common for Beijingers to spend 30-50 minutes getting home from work. Now, sometimes I can beat my Beijing-native colleagues home." Not long ago, he purchased an electronic fast pass for the Beijing-Tianjin Railway, which allowed him on the train with a simple swipe, negating the need to waste time buying a ticket at the railway station.

Similar tales abound along China's new high-speed rails. On December 3, 2010, another lightning-fast miracle occurred. At 11:28 a.m., a CRH-380A train set a speed record by reaching 486.1 kilometers per hour during a test run along the newly completed Beijing-Shanghai High-Speed Railway, moving more than 120 meters in a single second.

October 26, 2010: The 202-kilometer Shanghai-Hangzhou High-Speed Railway begins operation, with a designed speed of 350 kilometers per hour. by Zhang Kunrui

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August 1, 2008: The 120-kilometer Beijing-Tianjin Intercity Railway begins operation, with a designed speed of 350 kilometers per hour. by ***Yuan Ruilun***

A Century-old Dream

On October 2, 1909, a steamer locomotive puffing thick black smoke crept away from Beijing, then the imperial capital of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), past the Great Wall, continuing northward towards Zhangjiakou, its whistle echoing through the rolling mountains along the way. That day, the Beijing-Zhangjiakou Railway, the first of its kind designed and constructed independently by Chinese people, began operation, marking the inception of the nation's love affair with the rails.

On July 1, 1975, the Baoji-Chengdu Railway linking Shaanxi and Sichuan Provinces became China's first electric rail. Since then, electric trains running along the line have enabled faster speeds and cleaner emissions.

On August 1, 2008, a CRH train rolled to a speed of 300 kilometers per hour along the Beijing-Tianjin Intercity Railway that had just opened, cutting travel time between the two cities to 30 minutes. At that moment, China entered the high-speed rail era.

In recent years, China's high-speed rail development has accelerated consistently. In 2004, the country

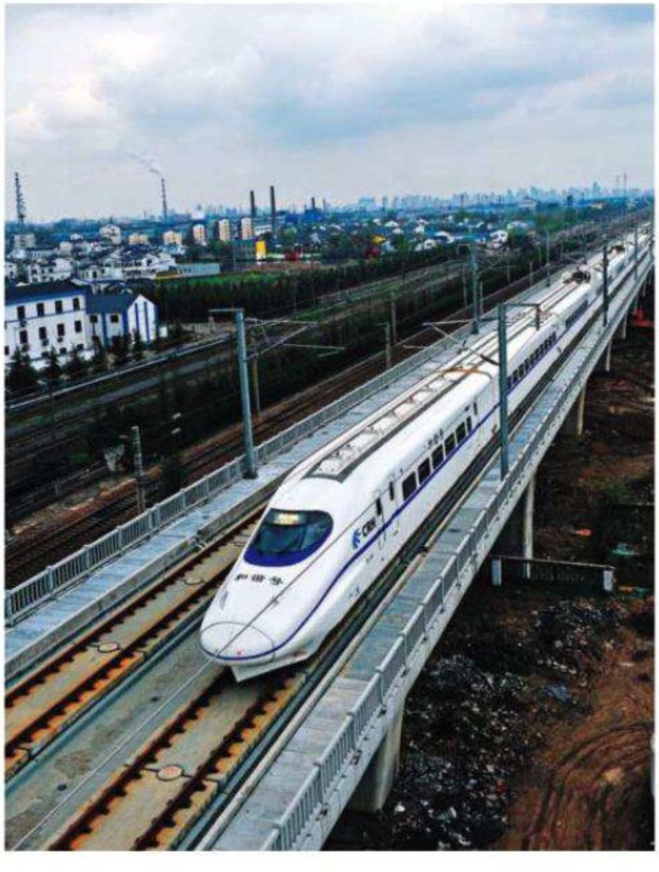
An aerial view of the Beijing South Railway Station. by Yang Bingzheng and Yuan Ruilun

first imported high-speed rail technology from countries such as Germany and France. In 2008, its first high-speed rail – the Beijing-Tianjin Intercity Railway – began operation. Within five years, Chinese rail administrators accomplished what took Europeans 50 years to develop. Experts assert that despite all the early success, China's high-speed rails remain in their infancy. On November 15, 2010, the last track of the 1,318-kilometer Beijing-Shanghai High-Speed Rail was laid, marking the nation's greatest infrastructure project with the largest investment yet and newest technology.

According to the *Mid and Long-term Railway Network Plan* devised by China's Ministry of Railways, by 2020, the country's total length of operating rails should reach 120,000 kilometers, including 16,000 kilometers of newly-added of high-speed rails. By then, China's total high-speed rail network is expected to eclipse 50,000 kilometers and serve more than 90 percent of the population, connecting every provincial capital and city with more than 500,000 people. Nowadays, China's high-speed rail revolution is creating a "butterfly effect" throughout all aspects of its society.

Economic Motivator

In the eyes of businesspeople, high-speed rail development creates greater opportunities. It is estimated that every one yuan invested in high-speed railways stimu-



July 1, 2010: The 301-kilometer Shanghai-Nanjing High-Speed Railway begins operation, with a designed speed of 350 kilometers per hour. by Wang Kaili lates about nine yuan output from related industries. So far, the high-speed rail industry has become not only an important economic motivator, but also a new wealth growth point.

According to the *Mid and Long-term Railway Network Plan*, the country will invest a total of 3.5 trillion yuan in high-speed rail projects over the next five years – approximately 700 billion yuan annually.

The Beijing-Shanghai Railway's total investment of 220.94 billion yuan serves as one example: The project created at least 2 million new jobs in areas along the line, and experts estimate that it stimulated 1.2 trillion yuan of domestic consumption within the first two years of construction.

Fortune magazine commented that the "monumental infrastructure project [the Beijing-Shanghai High-Speed Railway] has become the centerpiece of China's efforts to circumvent the global financial crisis and the ensuing recession." Infrastructure spending could stimulate economic growth and – more importantly – absorb a labor surplus. Xi Tongli, from rural Henan Province, who worked on the Beijing-Shanghai project, is one example. In the fall of 2008, he was toiling away in a Guangdong factory that made industrial fasteners for export. When the factory closed due to the global financial crisis, Xi found himself unemployed. He called a friend who was working on a section of the high-speed line that would eventually connect Beijing and Shanghai. Two months later, he was hired at a wage of US$250 a month. "I was happy to have a job so that I could still send money back home and help my parents," he asserts.

Statistics show that China invests 190 million yuan in high-speed rail construction daily, consuming 10,000 tons of steel, 35,000 tons of cement, and 110,000 cubic meters of concrete. "Railway investments are serving as a 'locomotive' that drags China's economy forward," remarks Wang Yongping, spokesperson for the country's Ministry of Railways. With the constant rise of its rail transportation industry, China has become the world's second largest railway equipment market, following only the United States.

Propelling Balanced Development

Undoubtedly, China's rapid high-speed rail construction will accelerate urbanization. Statistics show that in 2009, the country's urbanization rate reached 46.6 percent, with 622 million of its people residing in urban areas, and by 2020 those figures are expected to rise to 60 percent and 863 million, respectively. Now, an increasing number of Chinese migrant workers are commuting between rural and urban areas, and the tremendous flow of people is accomplished primarily through railways.

Although high-speed rails don't shorten distances between cities, they do cut intercity travel time substantially, thus enhancing intercity flow of people and cargo. Over the two years since the Beijing-Tianjin Intercity Railway began operation, many residents of both cities have found improvements in their well-being. "The prices of many commodities in Tianjin are lower than Beijing," some Beijing consumers declare. "High-speed rails now offer a comfortable and economical means to purchase

A CRH3 train gallops along the Beijing-Tianjin Intercity Railway, known as the country's first high-speed rail with a designed velocity of 350 kilometers per hour. ***by Wang Wei***

seafood and imports in Tianjin, where one can also enjoy cheaper hot spring baths."

With such convenient transport between the two cities, many Beijingers have flooded Tianjin in search of real estate opportunities. According to the Reform and Development Commission of Tianjin, in 2008, 30 percent of local property purchases were made by non-locals, of which half were from Beijing.

Today, China has transformed from an also-ran to a frontrunner in the global high-speed rail industry. As a more environmentally friendly and convenient means of transport, high-speed railways are gradually changing the Chinese lifestyle, influencing concepts related to employment, consumption habits, and vacation trends.

For historical and geographical reasons, there is still an enormous development gap between China's eastern coastal regions and western inland areas. Experts assert that high-speed rails will accelerate the country's urbanization process and enhance transit of the rural labor surplus, facilitate human and information exchange between rural and urban areas, and urge relevant industries to branch out from developed regions to underdeveloped regions, ultimately closing the gap between rich and poor areas. Moreover, high-speed rails will help kindle prosperity in both rural and urban markets while propelling balanced development in contrasting regions.

The role the high-speed rail is playing in China is not only that of an accelerator that stabilizes the country's economic growth and enables its economic restructuring, but also a motivator that enables healthy social progress. As a Swedish researcher from the European Union Research Institute said, "It is smart for China to develop high-speed rails, in which the country has not only found a new growth point, but also enabled itself to lead the world into the future of new energy utilization… To some extent, China is not building only a means of transport, but also a brighter future."

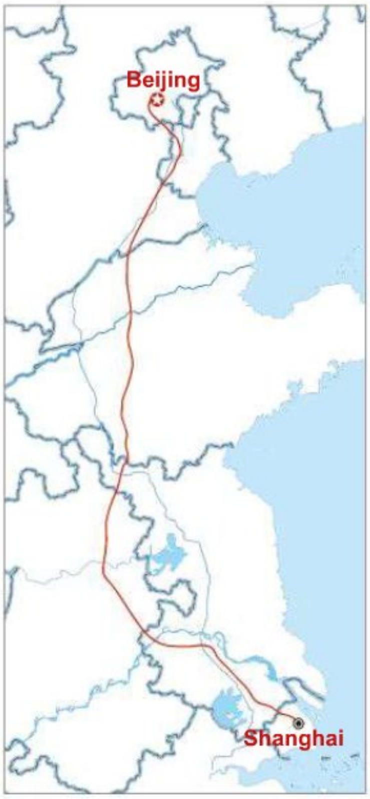
The 1,318-kilometer Beijing-Shanghai High-Speed Railway has a designed speed of 350 kilometers per hour. ***by Ding Wanbin***

Beijing South Station. by Yang Bingzheng and Yuan Ruilun

Another Wonder of the World

The Great Rail of Beijing-Shanghai

Text by Yan Zuokui



The Beijing-Shanghai High-Speed Railway route.

In the calendars of Beijing-Shanghai High-Speed Railway offices, three specific days are most significant: Construction began on April 18, 2008, the last track was laid on November 15, 2010, and the line will begin operation on some yet-to-be-named date in 2011. The line will be the world's fastest and longest high-speed rail link, setting lofty new global standards for rail construction.

A total investment of 220.94 billion yuan will give the 1,318-kilometer track the ability to handle speeds of over 350 kilometers per hour. A total of 24 stops are set up along the line, from Beijing South to Shanghai Hongqiao. One-way passenger volume is expected to reach 80 million annually. During the December 3, 2010 test run on the Zaozhuang West-Bengbu South section, a CRH-380A train set a speed record of 486.1 km/hour. The train will slash surface travel time from China's Bohai Sea rim to Yangtze River Delta to less than five hours, not only revolutionizing travel between Beijing and Shanghai – the country's two most important cities – but also punctuating the nation's current technology and economic growth.

Linking Beijing and Shanghai

Dissecting four provinces (Hebei, Shandong, Anhui, and Jiangsu) while servicing three major municipalities (Beijing, Shanghai, and Tianjin), the Beijing-Shanghai High-Speed Railway is the benchmark of China's vast railway transportation network. Connecting two of China's most thriving economic zones, the railway will not only ease traffic, but also enhance the country's comprehensive transit network. According to Zhao Guotang, vice general manager and chief engineer of Beijing-Shanghai High-Speed Railway Co., Ltd., the railway was designed to the highest standards not only for factors like speed, but also for safety and comfort, while saving room for further improvements.

A symbol of China's comprehensive national strength, the Beijing-Shanghai High-Speed Railway may serve as a sort of industrial and technical highlight reel. The utilization of new materials testified to major technical innovation in high speed railway construction, according to Zhao. For example, the Dashengguan Yangtze River Bridge in Nanjing required about 80,000 tons of steel, but without the inclusion of new materials, the required steel would have been much more. Greater amounts of steel can cause different problems. If the thickness of a steel plate exceeds 80 centimeters, welding is very difficult. So, in cooperation with Wuhan Iron and Steel Group, the Beijing-Shanghai High-Speed Railway Company developed a new steel alloy that skirted the welding issue.

China is proud to become the world leader in high-speed rail technology and a trendsetter for future global rail development. When operational, the Beijing-Shanghai Rail will set new standards for population flow, cargo transport, and information-sharing between China's two most important economic zones while stimulating local economies along the entire line.

Innovative Trends

The railway's groundbreaking safety and stability at such speeds can be attributed to technological innovation. For practical purposes, overall construction was divided into six sections, and China Railway 17 Bureau Group was responsible for building a 224-kilometer section running through Beijing, Tianjin, and Hebei Province's Langfang and Cangzhou. During construction, the group independently researched and developed some under-track technologies and techniques. "We hold independent intellectual property rights to all under-track engineering," the group announced.

To ensure smooth rides at the highest speeds, the railway adopted II ballastless track. Although China Railway 17 Bureau Group already imported ballastless track technology for their previous project, it was unfamiliar with laying methods. To solve the problem, the group joined with other institutes to research and develop a solution. When inevitable hurdles presented themselves during the long ambitious process, designers consistently responded with innovation. With several similar exam-

Dashengguan Yangtze River Bridge under construction in Nanjing. by ***Ding Wanbin***

Laying ballast-less track. by ***Ding Wanbin***

Construction site. by ***Ding Wanbin***

Working high. by ***Ding Wanbin***

Nanjing South Station. by Ding Wanbin

ples of progress through innovation during construction, it would be no exaggeration to assert that the project not only enhanced China's design and construction capabilities related to transport, but also demonstrated the value of producing original intellectual property.

Other notable technical innovations include accurate adjustment of long rails and safety alert cards. Every on-site builder holds a safety alert card, in compliance with working regulations. To ensure the success of joint debugging and trial, employees must strictly follow every regulation on the card. Usually, instructions for a test run are received at night, requiring tracks to be cleared by 5:30 the following morning. So, workers must clear machines, tools and materials by 2:30 a.m. so that supervisors can confirm the site. Then, after examining on-site reports, project managers make a second confirmation. Individual construction teams are responsible for the third confirmation before the final green light. When the trial run finally begins at 5:30 a.m., guards are positioned every 100 meters along the track to ensure that bystanders stay clear. Such organized safety regulations ensure the well-being of all involved people, as well as the success of the test.

Dashengguan Yangtze River Bridge, Nanjing. by Ding Wanbin

Environmental Consideration

Aiming to be an environmentally friendly and resource-conserving project, over 80 percent of the Beijing-Shanghai High-Speed Railway runs over bridges. The Third Railway Survey and Design Institute Group participated in both design and construction. Sun Shuli, vice president and chief engineer of the group, has much to say about the 80 percent. "Bridges can save a lot of land," he remarks. "Since the railway passes across China's most developed and populous area, land is especially valuable." Additionally, bridges are more easily quality-controlled and infringe less on local governments' land usage plans.

During the entire construction process, noise and emissions were strictly controlled. The railway's course avoided many scenic spots along the way, such as Langya Mountain and the imperial tombs of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) in Fengyang County. Pollution caused by construction was tightly controlled. "The railway's construction presented many environmental protection challenges," reveals Zhao Guotang. Since the railway passes by many drinking water resources, and urbanization is high south of Nanjing City, environmental protection is always a top concern during construction.

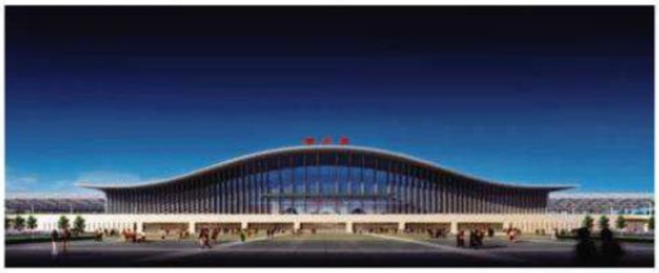
So, ecological restoration and preservation became a crucial step of the process. Nearly 50 bridge beam plants were set up at different places along the railway, with each covering 8 to 10 hectares. Bridge construction required 64 concrete mixing stations along the way, each covering 1.33 hectares. If all of this land was not reclaimed, the waste of resources and damage to the ecological system would be major. To avoid this, when the structures were built, arable soil was moved aside into piles. Later, the soil could be replaced and the land reclaimed.

According to China's Ministry of Railways, by 2012, the country's total length of rails in operation will reach 110,000 kilometers. By then, China's high-speed railways are expected to exceed 13,000 kilometers with a "one-to-eight-hour transit" radius from Beijing to most provincial capitals. "High speed railways will be able to serve more than 90 percent of the country's population and connect all provincial capitals and cities with greater than 500,000 people," remarks Wang Yongping, spokesperson of China's Ministry of Railways.

As the aorta of China's rails, the Beijing-Shanghai High-Speed Railway embodies not only the great capabilities of China's newest high-speed rail technologies, but also the nation's shift towards innovation. Its importance far exceeds the unprecedented mobility granted to residents of the country's two biggest cities, as the project marks a new era of greater Chinese contributions to the progress of the planet.

*A CRH-380A train passes over Huaihe River Bridge. by **Fan Tiejun***

Rendering of Tianjin Station.



Rendering of Xuzhou Station.

*Shanghai Hongqiao Station. by **Cui Xili***

上海虹桥站
HONGQIAO RAILWAY STATION

30 Years on the Rails

Text and photographs by Wang Fuchun

Long ago, I developed a special affection for railways while working in the industry. When I became a freelance photographer, naturally, my lens was more attracted to locomotives galloping down endless bars of steel, carrying travelers to a plethora of destinations. Over the past three decades, I amassed more than 1,000 railway journeys totaling a distance of over 100,000 kilometers while visiting places like Mohe in the North, Guangzhou in the South, Golmud in the West, and Shanghai in the East. During my travels, I captured tens of thousands of pictures, documenting the wide range of lifestyles I witnessed along the way.

Although China's total rails now exceed 90,000 kilometers, comparing this distance to the total population would allot each citizen the length of a cigarette.

In the past, frequent and incomparably heavy population flows increased pressure on China's railway industry and constantly presented new challenges. The simple act of purchasing a ticket could be incredibly difficult at times, and the trip itself was often far from comfortable. When they presented themselves, I took the opportunities to snap pictures of such scenes happening in train cabins as they were transforming into unique capsulated societies, which together formed an unforgettable chapter of the nation's railway history.

1998: Tongliao to Jining.

Since the turn of the 21st century, China has launched six rounds of the national rail acceleration campaign, increasing operating speed from 100 to 250 kilometers per hour and introducing the Beijing-Tianjin Intercity Railways with a designed maximum speed of 350 kilometers per hour and the Beijing-Shanghai High-Speed Railway at 380 kilometers per hour. In the cutting-edge cars, passengers can pass time surfing the internet, chatting online, playing video games, watching movies, listening to music, chatting on mobile phones, or trading stock. The scenes atop China's rails have changed as drastically as anything else in the country.

I consider myself lucky to have had the opportunity to witness so many lives from such an angle, and these photos showcase the remarkable accomplishments of the Chinese railway industry over the past 30-plus years since the introduction of the reform and opening-up policy.

2007: Nanchang to Shanghai.

CRH
CRH₃-015A
CRH

2008: Beijing to Harbin.

1994: Guangzhou Station.

1978: Sankeshu Station.

2007: Shanghai to Beijing.

1991: Harbin to Shanghai.

2010: Beijing to Shanghai.

2010: Beijing to Shenyang.

1994: Qiqihar to Beijing.

1996: Guangzhou to Chengdu.

1996: Guangzhou to Chengdu.

2007: Beijing to Shanghai.

2007: Changsha to Shanghai.

2007: Nanchang to Shanghai.

2000: Harbin Station.

1994: Harbin Station.

2009: Beijing to Shenyang.

Beauty Sky Dreams

Every person and entity possesses equal opportunity to create and invent, however, not all entrepreneurs ever take the chance to build their own brands.

When building a brand, one should first free himself from constraints of prejudice and traditional thinking, with eyes wide open for the possibility of discovery, creation and invention. Innovation is built from dreams, science and adventure.

Beauty Sky endured the journey yesterday, building a brand with wisdom.

Beauty Sky strives towards higher goals tomorrow.

We are looking forward to the future.

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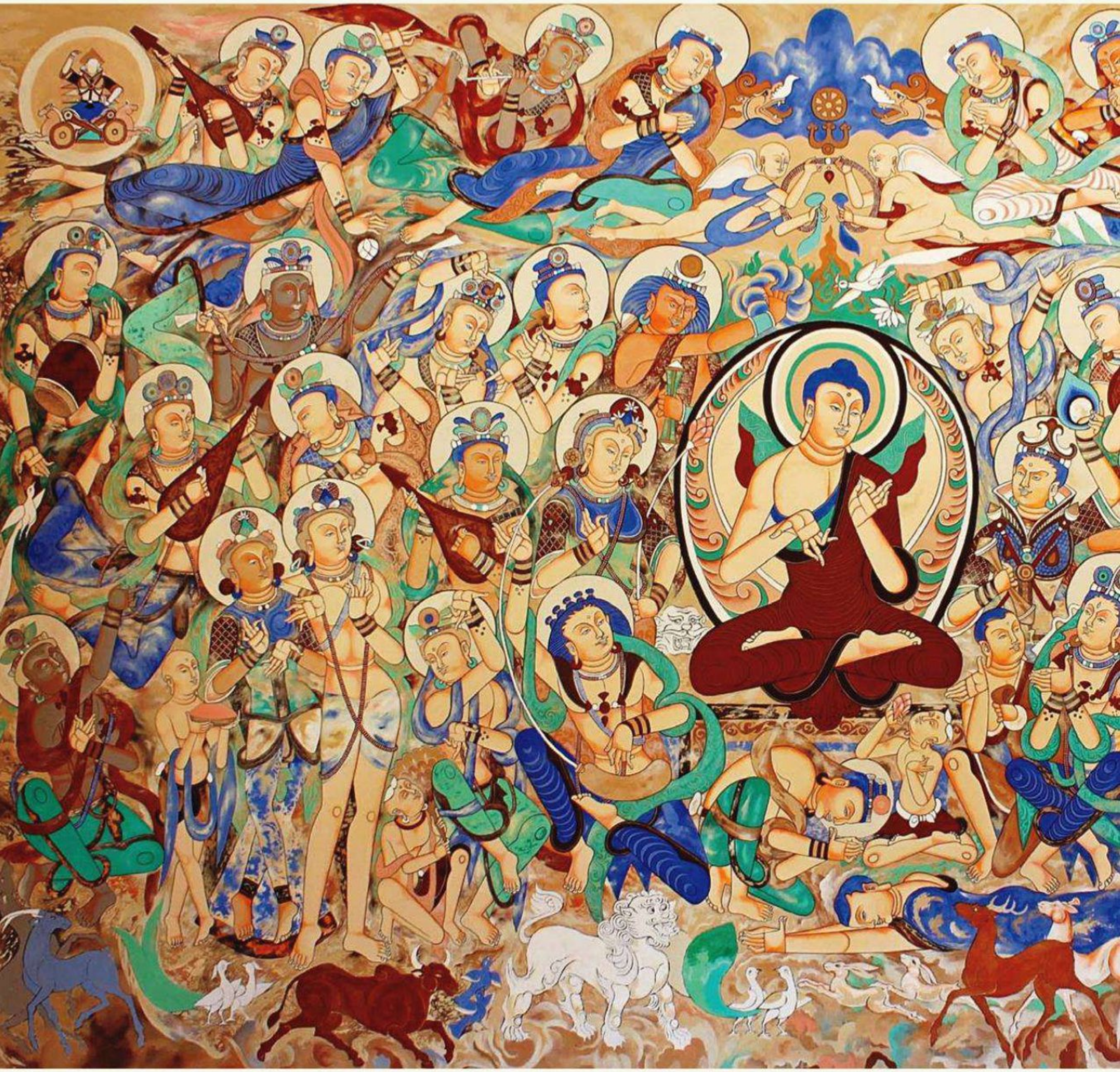
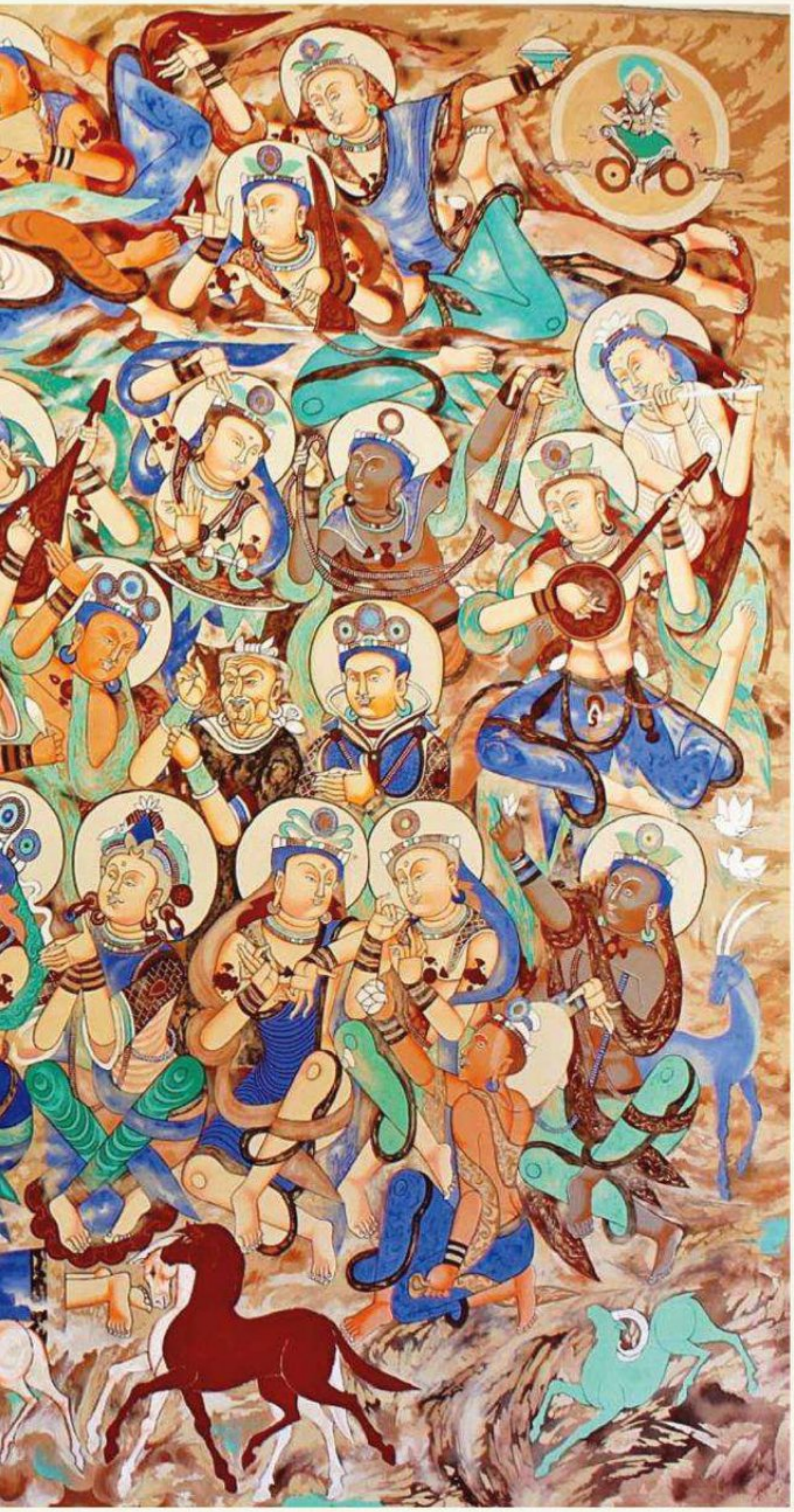


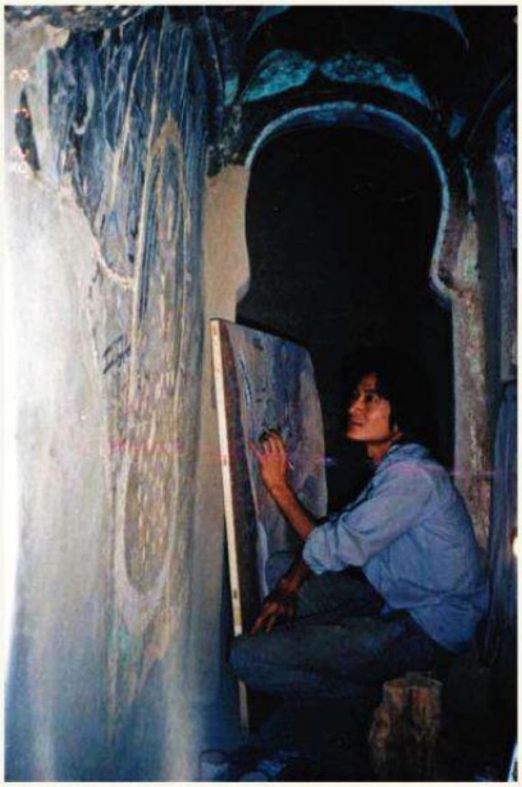
Fresco Aficionado

Text by Fu Xianglong and Wang Yongqiang

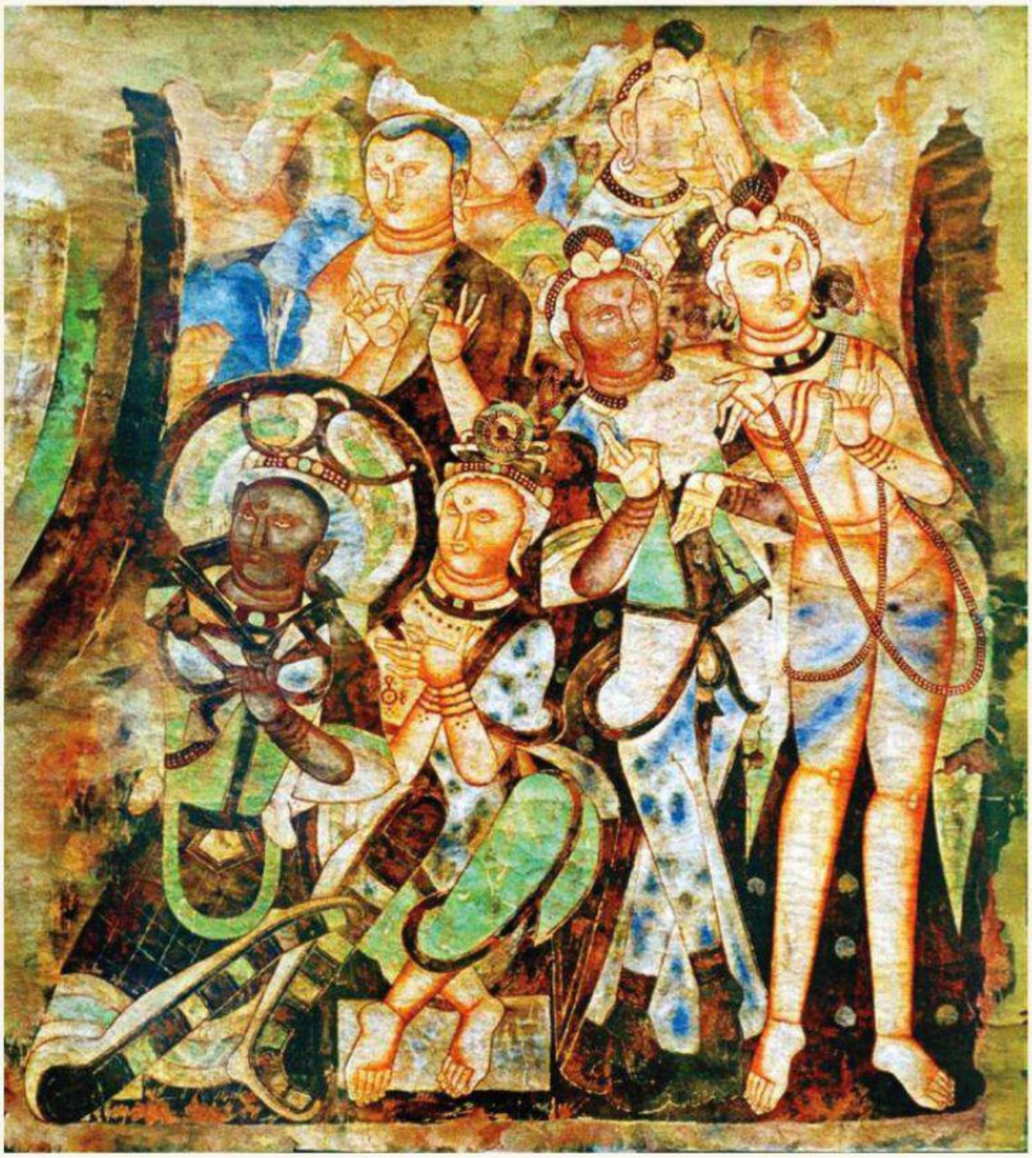


An imitation by Wang Zheng, the mural features a typical Tang style with refined techniques.

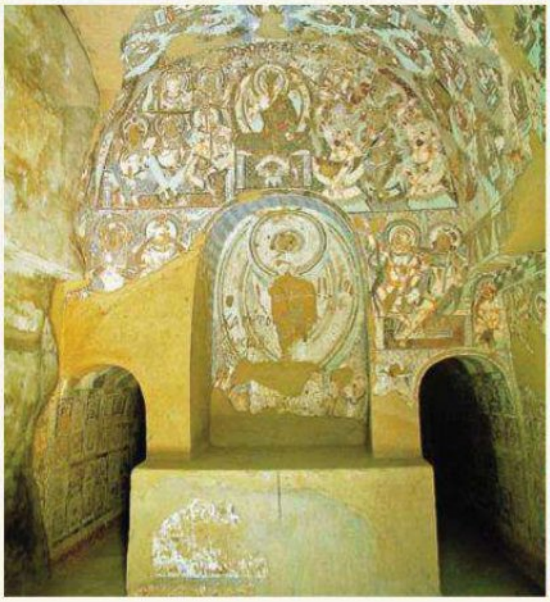
Fueled by enthusiasm for art, Prof. Wang Zheng, at the College of Fine Arts of Xinjiang Normal University, spent nine years in Kizil Thousand-Buddha Caves, where he studied, imitated, sorted, and documented the timeless Qiuci frescos. His efforts have helped uncover the fantastic world of Qiuci Buddhist art.



1995: Wang Zheng works to copy from the fresco in Cave 175 of Kizil Grottoes.



After many harsh years of unremitting efforts made in mural imitation in remote Kizil Grottoes, Wang Zheng achieved an outstanding artistic accomplishment.



As an ancient kingdom along the Silk Road, Quici covered a sprawling area including today's Kuga and Baicheng in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. After Buddhism was introduced in the 1st century, it prevailed in the kingdom through the 3rd century. Xuan Zang (602-664, a Tang Dynasty monk, traveler, and translator) noted in his book *Great Tang Records on the Western Regions* that Qiuci's Buddhism reached its pinnacle around the 5th century as evidenced by the extensive construction of temples. Theravada Buddhist monks attached great importance on individual enlightenment, so they often chose secluded mountain caves for spiritual cultivation.

Kizil Thousand-Buddha Caves, China's oldest remaining grottoes, date back to a period from 4th to 8th century. Carved into the cliffs on the northern bank of the Muzhati River Valley southeast of Kizil Township in Baicheng County, the grottoes are considered the largest of a dozen groups of their kind in Xinjiang. So far, 236 caves have been excavated, revealing a plethora of murals that total more than 10,000 square meters.

Along with the other three of China's four "greatest" grottoes (Longmen in Henan, Yungang in Shanxi, and Dunhuang in Gansu), Kizil Grottoes became one of the first cultural sites to acquire state protection when they were named by the State Council in 1961.

In August 1993, Wang Zheng first set foot in the caves. When recalling the moment he gazed at the paintings gracing the walls, Wang compared his emotions to meeting a mysterious beauty from a distant, bygone era.

For some time, Wang admired the diverse colors of the murals: Fading through the transition of black into white is a mix of flaming vermilion and hazy blue. Despite a lifetime of more than 1,000 years, the paintings remained spectacular and mesmerizing.

Feeling hypnotized by the overwhelming beauty, the young man began obsessively copying the murals. Except for a canteen and cake, he brought only a bag filled with paper and brushes.

During the nine years that followed, Wang scoured the mountains on the north side of the Muzhati River Valley, his footprints left in every cave.

With the passing of a millennium of history, the murals acquired a dazzling visual appeal. Some color blocks had peeled off, giving the paintings sublime imperfection. But, how to copy the "scars" by nature, how to reproduce elegant hues created by centuries of time, and which paper and pigments would best serve his purpose? Wang carefully contemplated these questions.

His experimentation began with pigments generally used for traditional and water-color paintings, which, after some processing, approximated the effects of the murals, missing only the subtle difference in texture. Later, inspired by *Compendium of Materia Medica,* a pharmaceutical classic written by Li Shizhen (1518-1593) during the Ming Dynasty, Wang learned that in ancient times people tended to use locally-produced plants and mineral substances for pigment. The white color used for human skin on the murals, for example, contains local products such as plaster, quartz, and mica. So, Wang began to collect ore surrounding the grotto site and processed them into pigments nearing the precise colors.

The artist endured sleepless nights at a stone table. His left hand flipped pages of a book while the right one ground ore, accompanied only by a cup of tea and crisp wind. Eventually, using his self-made pigments, Wang completed imitations of many Qiuci frescos. Those who examined his imitation of the fresco in Cave 178 marveled at the perfect recreation of a huge chunk that peeled off the wall.

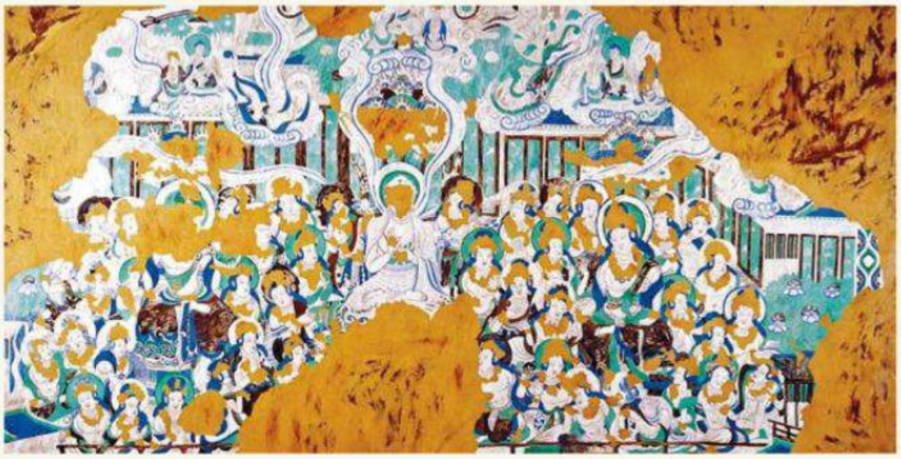
Kizil Grottoes vary in size along rugged terrain, requiring Wang to adopt a variety of postures when copying the murals. He crouched at narrow places, squatted or knelt in low caves, and mounted a stool to observe the higher images. To examine paintings on the ceiling, he often lied on the ground.

His imitation of *Desires of the Five Senses* in Cave 175 presented the most difficult challenge. As Xinjiang's only surviving painting representing typical Qiuci style, the mural includes myriad figures with lifelike poses, solemn expressions, and elegant clothes. It is considered the best example of the highest-known level of Kizil grotto art.

However, the mural was found on the side wall of a narrow passage only 70 centimeters in width. Reproducing the masterpiece consumed Wang for several months, and the process involved determining the scale of details, drafting, copying section by section, and then patching them together to form the whole.

By 2002, Wang had copied more than 300 Qiuci murals. *Fine Arts,* the authoritative Chinese art journal, published two of Wang's essays on Qiuci murals in 2001 and 2003, and 17 of his imitations dominated 18 pages of the magazine's January 2003 issue. Wang's work immediately became a sensation in Chinese art circles.

It was the first time the magazine devoted so many pages to a young artist's work since its inception in 1955. According to its editorial note, dozens of Wang's mural imitations can be considered art treasures, and thanks to his extensive study and meticulous creation, the reproductions themselves already possess significant value.



Wang Zheng's superb imitations are praised as "incarnations of ancient Buddhist art."

Between 2003 and 2007, Wang independently completed a thorough study of the styles and techniques of Xinjiang's ancient Buddhist grotto art. Based on his milestone achievement of dividing Qiuci mural styles into 10 categories, a new systematic theory on Qiuci mural genres emerged, providing a valuable reference point for further study of the ancient Qiuci Kingdom.

In 2010, Wang completed his theses "Investigation and Analysis of Newly Discovered Tashkurgan Valley Grottoes" and "Tracing Master Xuan Zang's Route along Tashkurgan," correcting errors in previous studies.

Also, he was invited to Wutai Mountain, in Shanxi Province, to design and paint murals for Manjushri Hall. Using techniques and designs he learned from the Qiuci murals, he created a large-format painting, *Manjushri Bodhisattva,* which was praised as "the first recreation of Qiuci Buddhist fresco in a Buddhist temple and reincarnation of the art in the Central Plains after a millennium of silence."

In honor of Wang's unremitting efforts to study, imitate, and protect Xinjiang's Qiuci grotto murals over the past 16 years, a group of governmental and nongovernmental organizations jointly crowned him one of the "Chinese Culture Figures of 2010."

Wang Zheng receives the honorable title as one of the "Chinese Culture Figures of 2010."

Cat droppings.

SHRINKING HABITAT

Text and photographs by Xiao Shibai

A virgin forest 3,000 meters above sea level in Tibet provides paradise for wildlife.

Initially, I was hesitant to accept the assignment from the Image Biodiversity Expedition (IBE) to spend a full month taking photos on a zoological investigation in southern Tibet.

The investigation group was composed of elite Chinese zoological photographers. Despite the wealth of experience spread throughout the group, team captain Xu Jian cautioned us before the journey: “Everyone has been insured. Your family will get 300,000 yuan if you become bear food or are washed down the Yarlung Zangbo River to India.” We knew that behind his humor was some truth. Everyone’s pulse accelerated in anticipation of the adventure to come.

I’ve been photographing wild animals for some time, so I thought I knew what to expect. I was well aware of growing dangers threatening the survival of countless endangered species in the country – results of urbanization, deforestation, mining, and extensive construction of highways and rails. Even in some nature reserves, conditions are less than ideal for protecting animals.

Too many habitats of wild animals have been unintentionally surrounded by roads, towns, and farmland, breaking the biological chain connecting living creatures, resulting in increasing extinction. It is a heartbreaking trend for both biologists and zoological photographers in China.

The reason southern Tibet was chosen for this trip is quite simple: As depicted in the movie *2012*, in the case of an unprecedented global disaster, Tibet could preserve the last surviving humans on earth. Southern Tibet remains largely untouched, and most of its wildlife thrives in peace.

It took two hours to drive from Nyingchi Airport to Paizhen before reaching Gyalha Sengtak, our final destination. Along the way, we passed barren hills with sparse vegetation. "We haven't seen animals down here for a year," revealed a local.

Fortunately, Gyalha Sengtak is located in a virgin forest. We were in for a two-day trek up a tall mountain.

As we inched up the hills, we passed a great variety of vegetation, including green sub-alpine coniferous trees, broad leaves, and a river-valley monsoon forest. I had never seen such a large chunk of untouched forest. I found myself guessing that it served as an ideal habitat for big animals, particularly predators.

"Look, its leg is still bleeding!" cried a team member, finding a wounded rat on a rock. "It must have been attacked by some kind of animal."

We were excited to find some larger droppings along the Yarlung Zangbo. The droppings were pillar-shaped, with bits of hair and bones. "It's a cat – medium or small!" I blurted out without hesitation.

The felidae family (cats – divided into subfamilies of felinae and pantherinae) sits at the top of the food chain in jungle bio-systems. Their presence proved that the forest was in healthy condition. However, it remained a daunting challenge to actually capture desirable pictures in such a dense forest.

We arrived at the camp along the Yarlung Zangbo River by lunch time the next day.

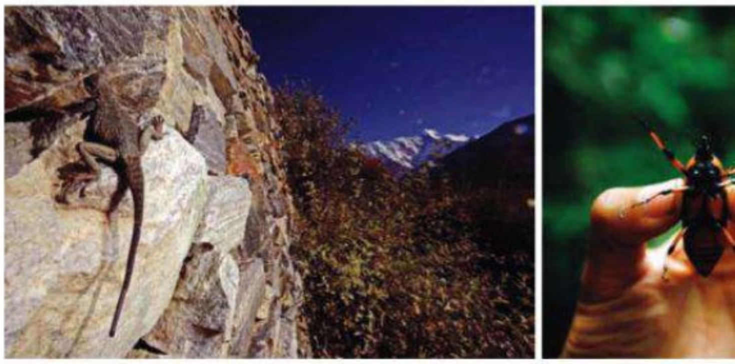
I immediately grabbed my infrared touch-off camera in hopes of shooting animals, but the question remained as to where the optimum shooting location would be. My primary target was the cats, which are very clever. I had to put myself in their mindset.

I guessed that in areas with this sort of climate and topography, felines are likely to prey on rodents. They would employ a "hide-and-pounce" strategy in the relatively open areas. So, I set up four cameras in open sand just off the river to the east of our camp, along with some fish organs for bait.

At 9 p.m. my camera revealed a yellow weasel sneaking around, snatching the bait, and running away.

We didn't expect such a

Setting up an infrared touch-off camera.



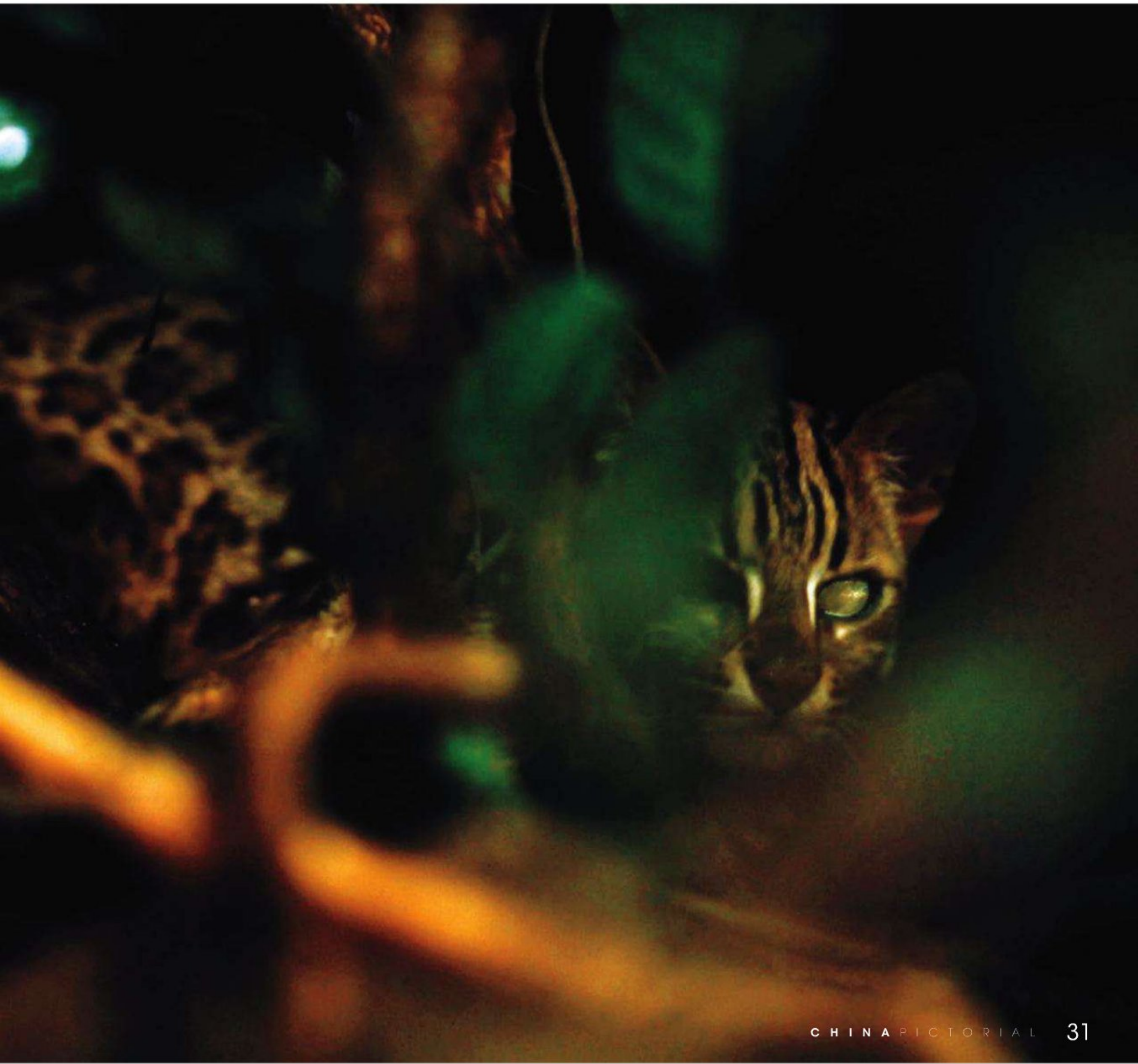
Laudakia papenfussi is a new species of reptiles discovered in 1995.

It proved difficult to catch images of leopard cats.

Beetles such as this one can be found all over the area.

An alpine insect.

A wild cat.



creature to steal bait placed so closely. "Maybe it never had any contact with mankind," someone hypothesized. Cautious yet curious, it seemed to weigh the risk and take the chance, making us believe that these animals fear human beings less than in other regions. On the other hand, we surmised that the local ecology was less disturbed.

My cameras showed no signs of the targets. "There are wild cats, big and small, but they are cunning," noted our guide. "Just the smell of your camera could scare them away." I suddenly remembered what a zoologist once told me, "Felidae have a superb sense of smell."

The guide scooped up some earth from the riverside and carefully smeared it on my camera. He then applied the smelly fish guts to get rid of the plastic and human smells. We continued to apply the fish organs daily, but still nothing happened.

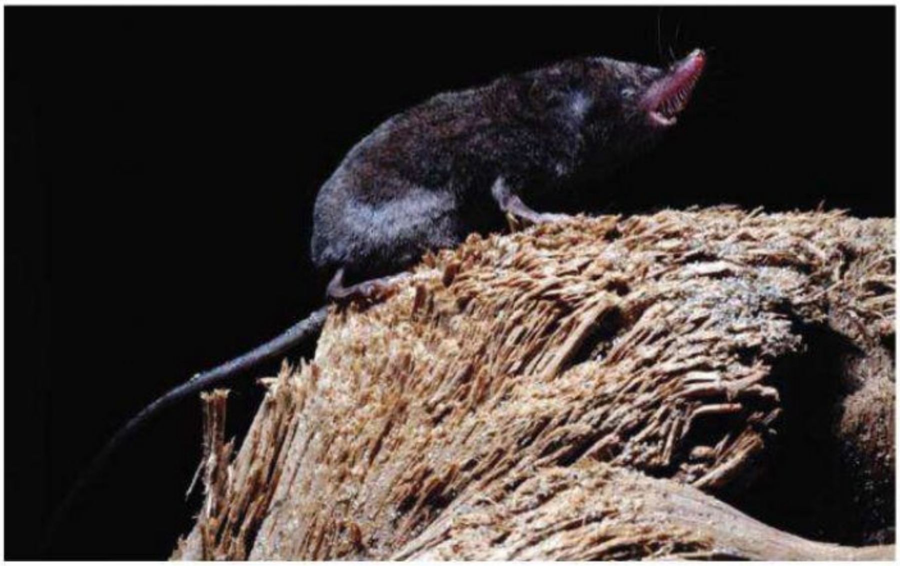
After 10 days we were losing patience. We turned to photographing more accessible alpine animals, such as takin, serow (both Himalyan goat-antelopes), and bluesheep. Once, when I was about to pack my cameras, I noticed a small change on the ground. It appeared to be a vague cat-like footprint. Overjoyed, I wasted no time rewinding to find a chubby jungle cat examining the camera. It showed no interest in the fish and quickly ran away. This seemed to be a positive turning point in our adventure.

During our one-month stay, our lenses captured quite a lot. We found four kinds of carnivorous animals, four kinds of even-toed ungulates (hoofed, artiodactyl), and more than 200 species of birds – a new record for such a campaign.

At an evening party, our guide offered to lead another expedition at a higher altitude. "There is a kind of big white cat with floral patterns," he claimed. "It eats bluesheep in particular."

Our analysis of the area made us believe that the complete forest type in this region – with sufficient snow and distinct vertical throw – made it an ideal home for bluesheep, serow, and Tibetan red goral, so it must also support some species of leopard.

Our photographic experience



A mole.

A ferret-badger with its prey.

Wild foliage.

over the years dictates that the places with well-preserved ecological conditions offer the best space for wild animals. Such places are usually sparsely inhabited, undeveloped, and lack transportation and economic infrastructure. The necessary factors prove just how contradictory human development is to preserving the natural environment.

The zoological assessment campaign in southern Tibet was launched to remind us that human beings are not the sole resident of earth and that animals need a piece of homeland to survive.

During our stay, we noticed TV news report that a highway was to be built some 100 kilometers from Nyingchi. In the short term, it seems like an exciting development, but in the long run, the effects could be terrifying. We can measure the price of concrete and steel, but no one can yet accurately appraise potential damage to previously untouched land.

Ready to shoot.

A lonely Tibetan red goral.

Noble Porpoise

Text by Zhao Chunyan
Photographs by Yang Jiankun

In 2007, scientists conducted a six-week search of the Yangtze River, hoping to spot Chinese river dolphins. However, the results were disappointing: It appeared likely that the animal was already extinct. If this is true, the Chinese river dolphin became the first porpoise subspecies to go extinct due to human activity. The news stirred up great concern for every animal living along the Yangtze River. Unfortunately, the Yangtze finless porpoise, another endangered porpoise subspecies nicknamed "ugly cousin of the Chinese river dolphin," is also on the verge of extinction.

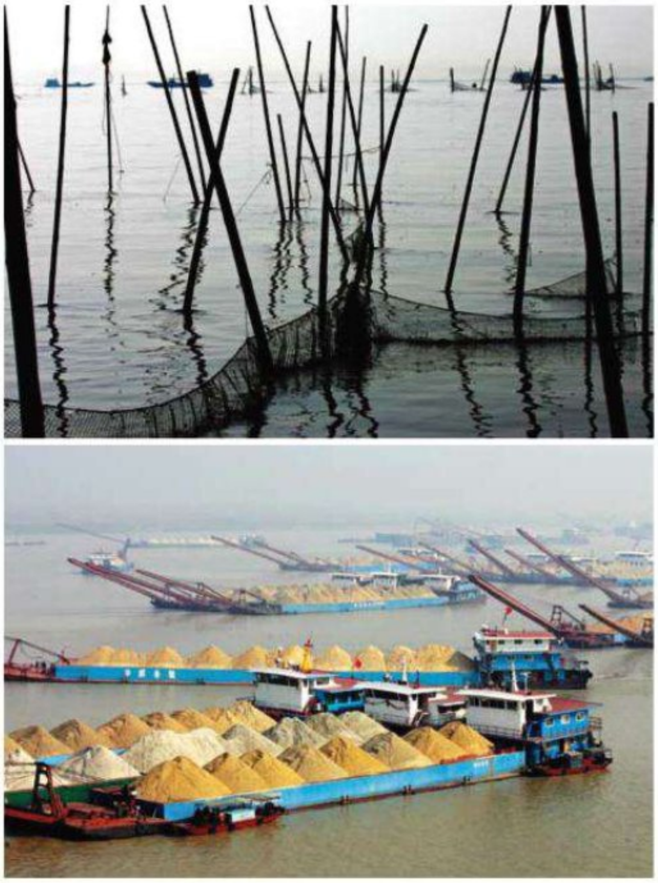
The Yangtze, ranked as the world's third longest river, features rich biological diversity. Of the 350 species of fish that call the river home, 112 aren't found elsewhere, including some extremely rare species. Previously, the river was considered a paradise for a variety of porpoises. However, increasing human activity in the area left less and less room for the aquatic mammals to survive. For instance, the Yangtze finless porpoise population has dropped substantially, and now they can only be found in a few sections of the river in addition to Dongting and Poyang Lakes. Beginning in 2005, researchers from the Institute of Hydrobiology under the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) spent two years monitoring wild Yangtze finless porpoises in Poyang Lake. They concluded that due to its abundant food resources and favorable environment, the section of the Yangtze from the lake mouth to Laoyemiao offers a suitable breeding habitat for more than 400 Yangtze finless porpoises, about one third of the surviving total. Seemingly, the section has become the last refuge for the endangered animal.

Compared with the Chinese river dolphin that evolved little since remote antiquity, the Yangtze finless porpoise has a greater ability to adapt to a changing environment. A smart animal, it boasts an intelligence level comparable to sea dolphins or jungle apes. Typically, an adult Yangtze finless porpoise measures 120-190 centimeters in length and weighs 100-220 kilograms. Although as mammals, they breathe with lungs like humans, they remain energetic and showy swimmers. Lucky viewers can spot them performing acrobatics in the Yangtze River, leaping from the water, spraying water through their noses, and standing on their tails.

As an endangered species living along the Yangtze River, the Yangtze finless porpoise is even rarer than the giant panda.

Currently, it is extremely rare for people to spot wild Yangtze finless porpoises.

The Yangtze finless porpoise reproduces at a relatively slow rate. A female gives birth to only one calf after an 11-month pregnancy. The female demonstrates strong motherhood. If a calf gets trapped, the mother won't flee alone, which can cause her to be captured too. Sometimes, the male also participates in raising calves. It is a stunning scene when both parents accompany a calf shoulder-to-shoulder across the surface of the water.



Human activities such as fishing and sand dredging disturb the living environment of Yangtze finless porpoises.

Verge of Extinction

A wildlife species currently under state second-class protection, the Yangtze finless porpoise is the most endangered of the three freshwater porpoise subspecies living in China. In 1996, the IUCN Species Survival Commission added the species to its Red List of Threatened Species. In 1998, it was included in the *China Red Book of Endangered Animals (Mammals)*. According to the World Wildlife Fund, the population of Yangtze finless porpoises was at 2,700 two decades ago, and the figure plummeted to 1,800 in 2006. Today, the number of Yangtze finless porpoises is even less than that of wild giant pandas, which is believed to be holding steady at around 1,590 globally. As some experts declare, it is time for the species to be granted state first-class protection.

Currently, conditions for Yangtze finless porpoises remain gloomy.

First of all, excessive fishing often causes accidental killings of porpoises and threatens their food supply. With the constant increase of residents along the Yangtze River, human demand for fish perpetually rises as well, leaving a smaller and smaller share for remaining aquatic creatures. Additionally, according to some fragmented statistics, as much as half of the animal's deaths could be the result of accidental killing by fishermen.

Numerous ships cruising along the Yangtze River are another threat. During peak hours, a large vessel passes through the estuary of Poyang Lake every 30 seconds. Normally, porpoises can communicate and navigate through sonar, but the noise of a passing vessel will limit their echolocation abilities, causing some to be injured by propellers. Also, sand dredging vessels on the Yangtze generate loud noise that can actually cause porpoises to go deaf. Underwater explosions used in watercourse harnessing and water conservatory projects can also lead to porpoise death.

Today, the Yangtze River is plagued by severe water pollution. When porpoises eat contaminated fish, toxic substances will accumulate in their bodies and damage their reproductive abilities. Toxic substances can even be passed on to calves during gestation and breastfeeding. One of the most obvious effects of water pollution is a sharp decrease in primary biological productivity of water bodies along the Yangtze River, so clearly the finless porpoise population will decline quickly with diminishing food resources.

Rescue Efforts

Some Chinese scientists have been attempting to rescue Yangtze finless porpoises by moving them to protected reserves. The Tian'ezhou Chinese River Dolphin Nature Reserve in Shishou City, Hubei Province, is one such "paradise" that scientists managed to find for endangered species, where they can live and reproduce with little disturbance. Each year, the nature reserve witnesses the birth of one or two porpoise calves. In 2006, following the completion of the two Chinese river dolphin nature reserves in Hubei Province's Tian'ezhou and Xinluo sections of the Yangtze River, the Tongling Chinese River Dolphin Breeding Farm was transformed into a state-class nature reserve after 10 million yuan was invested in the project. Soon after, the Yueyang River Porpoise Nature Reserve in Hunan Province, the Zhenjiang Porpoise Nature Reserve in Jiangsu Province, and the Poyang Lake Yangtze Finless Porpoise Nature Reserve in Jiangxi Province were established. In total, China now has six national and provincial-level freshwater porpoise nature reserves.

Experts also assert that artificial cultivation and breeding can play important roles in protecting porpoises living in the Yangtze River. As early as 1996, the CAS Institute of Hydrobiology began artificially raising Yangtze finless porpoises. However, it is difficult for them to reproduce in captivity because water temperatures and feeding methods differ between artificial and natural environments. The Wuhan Chinese River Dolphin Aquarium now houses five Yangtze finless porpoises, of which the oldest has lived there for nearly 15 years, testifying that scientists have grasped mature porpoise artificial cultivation technology. However, few breakthroughs have been made in terms of artificial breeding of the Yangtze finless porpoise.

Both establishing nature reserves and developing artificial breeding are viable steps to help rescue the endangered species. However, such measures can't replace natural reproduction. Like other endangered wild animals preserved in captivity, Yangtze finless porpoises must eventually return to Mother Nature. So, the ultimate solution is the most difficult – conserving their natural habitat.

Experts call for extensive fishing bans throughout the Yangtze River. "If we cannot control excessive fishing, any other remedies will be wasted," asserts Xie Songguang, a researcher from the CAS Institute of Hydrobiology. "In fact, long-term fishing prohibition will not only rescue Yangtze finless porpoises from extinction and guarantee sufficient food for large and medium-sized carnivorous mammals in the river, but will also provide a chance for its middle and lower reaches to restore their ecosystems."

China has established an institution for the protection of Yangtze finless porpoises.

A researcher displays blood samples from Yangtze finless porpoises.

How to achieve peaceful coexistence between mankind and nature has become an issue of wide concern for the public.

ETCHED IN TIME

Dege Sutra Printing House

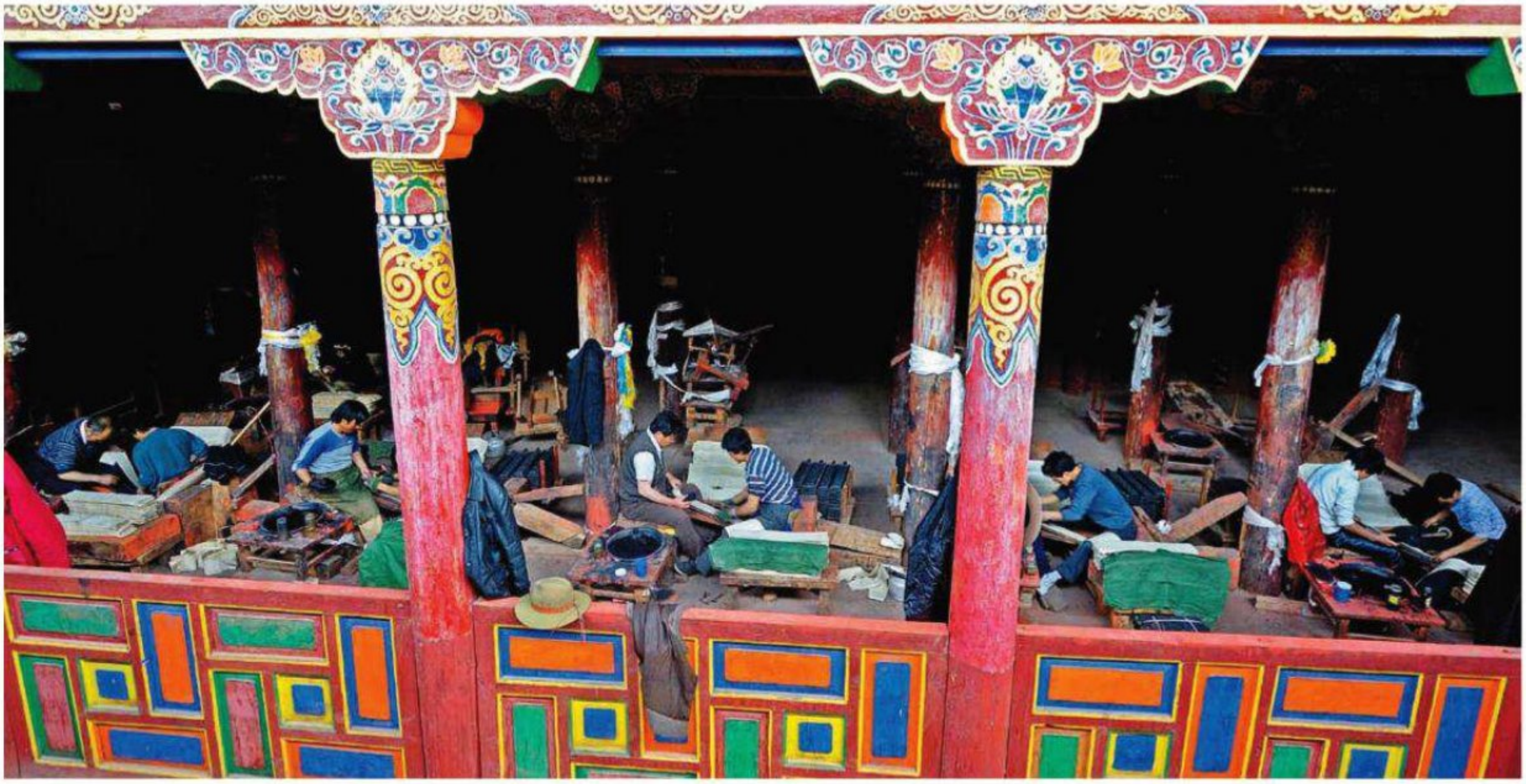
Text by Cai Wei and Kang He
Photographs by Phurbu Tashi

Our journey began in Kangding, capital of Sichuan Province's Garze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, and after crossing Zheduo Mountain ("bend" in Tibetan language), we continued westward to the hinterland of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, towards our destination: Dege, the center of the Tibetan Khampa Culture.

A venerated senior performs quality control.

The monastic printing house also attaches importance to the education of young lamas. ***CFP***

Each of the printing house's nearly 300,000 wood scripture blocks is engraved manually.



A printing process that has remained unchanged for centuries.

Only a few hundred kilometers separate Kangding and Dege, but nearly all the roads and highways connecting them were far from comfortable. Despite enchanting scenery along the way, we endured unexpected difficulties, including scaling the jagged summit of Chola Mountain. After an exhaustingly bumpy ride, with no help from the Jeep's broken fan casing, we finally realized why Kangding was a historic commodities hub of the Tibetan-inhabited areas. In the past, when modern highways didn't yet connect the western regions, the Ancient Tea-Horse Road remained the only trade route, on which Tibetan yaks and mule caravans abounded.

Dege is one of three cradles of Tibetan culture in China, along with Lhasa (Tibet) and Labrang (Gansu). The county is particularly famous for Dege Sutra Printing House, which boasts the most comprehensive and complete collection of Tibetan cultural documents along with a host of frescos and printing plates well preserved within an age-old building. In Tibetan, Dege translates to "land of mercy," and the locale is considered the birthplace of the hero of *King Gesar,* the world's longest epic. Historically, Dege was once the capital of a theocratic kingdom with a hereditary line of rulers.

Stuck in a narrow mountain valley along the Jinsha River, Gengqing Township helped the Dege Sutra Printing House survive the test of time. Hidden in shade under green trees, the red-walled, multi-story building in typical Tibetan style includes a scripture library, paper warehouse, printing workshop, Buddhist hall, and sutra chanting room. We visited the printing house on a Saturday afternoon and found many local residents circling the tall walls of the compound, rotating the prayer wheel by hand. They wore traditional Tibetan robes with men in straw hats and female heads topped with colorful adornments.

The sutra printing house was founded in 1729 by Chuji Donba Tsering of the 44th generation of Dege's ruling clan. Tradition holds that one evening when Donba Tsering strolled outside his palace, he heard children's voices resonant above a nearby hill as they chanted sutra. Another legend depicts a farmer of Jiangda County (then under Dege's rule) carving the full text of the *Longevity Sutra* on wood blocks. When he led a yak carrying the sutra plates to the palace, the yak became startled suddenly, and the blocks fell and scattered across the hill just steps from the palace. The accident, however, inspired Donba Tsering to establish a sutra printing house near the hill. Ground was broken on February 28, 1729, but construction lasted 30 years, across the reigns of four rulers. In the printing house's initial collection were nearly 2,000 engraved plates of Tibetan Buddhist scriptures, including one translated in the early 13th century and carved in three languages.

A worker examines printing blocks. ***CFP***

Printed scriptures are checked by experienced workers. CFP

Ground from ore using traditional methods, the pigment ensures that the ink will not fade.

Zer Doje is a prestigious folk custom expert in Dege. He argues that the popular name of the printing house isn't quite fit, stressing that locals call it 'Percetakan,' which defined in Tibetan contains the meanings of printing house, document library, and cultural palace. According to him, by the end of 1959, the printing house already acquired 210,000 scripture plates, and today it houses more than 290,000 wood printing blocks in addition to a collection of 830 classics and documents from various sects of Tibetan Buddhism, with subjects ranging from astronomy to geography, history, philosophy, science, medicine, mathematics, culture, and Tibetan calligraphy.

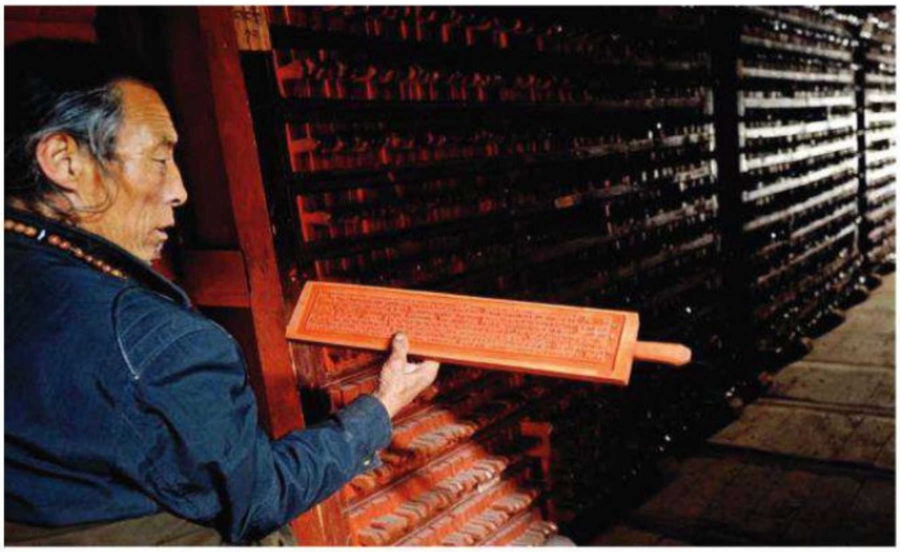
The second-floor printing workshop is the only well-lit place in the entire building. A small door from the workshop leads to the scripture library, where the first row of the dense shelves holds red engraved plates devoted to *Kangyur,* one of the principal canonical collections in classical Tibetan Buddhist literature. Carved during the period when the printing house was constructed, the sutra plates are considered priceless cultural relics. Each wood block measures 70 by 10 centimeters and features a small handle. Throughout the ages, the plates have been immersed in cinnabar (a mercury ore), which colors the scripts pure red.

Today, the printing house still produces 50-plus copies of *Kangyur* and *Tengyur* each year, as it has throughout history. At this pace, it can be estimated that each wood block has been used more than 10,000 times. However, the block's grooves still create smooth lines, testifying to the historical artisans' ingenuity. When the blocks were first engraved, the king supposedly paid the artisans in a special way: He filled notches with gold powder, then brushed his hand across the surface, so that powder left in the grooves would go to the artisans' pockets – deeper grooves collecting more gold powder.

In contrast to the quiet scripture library, the printing workshop was bustling when we entered, all eight of its printing devices simultaneously operating. The printing house still preserves traditional techniques in every phase from engraving and inking to paper-making and printing that have been handed down since its 13th century establishment. When working, two artisans sit face to face across a broad slanted wooden platform. One colors the block by brushing ink or cinnabar, while the other feeds sheets of cut paper across the block, rolling it with a revolving cylinder, so that black or red characters are left clearly on the paper.

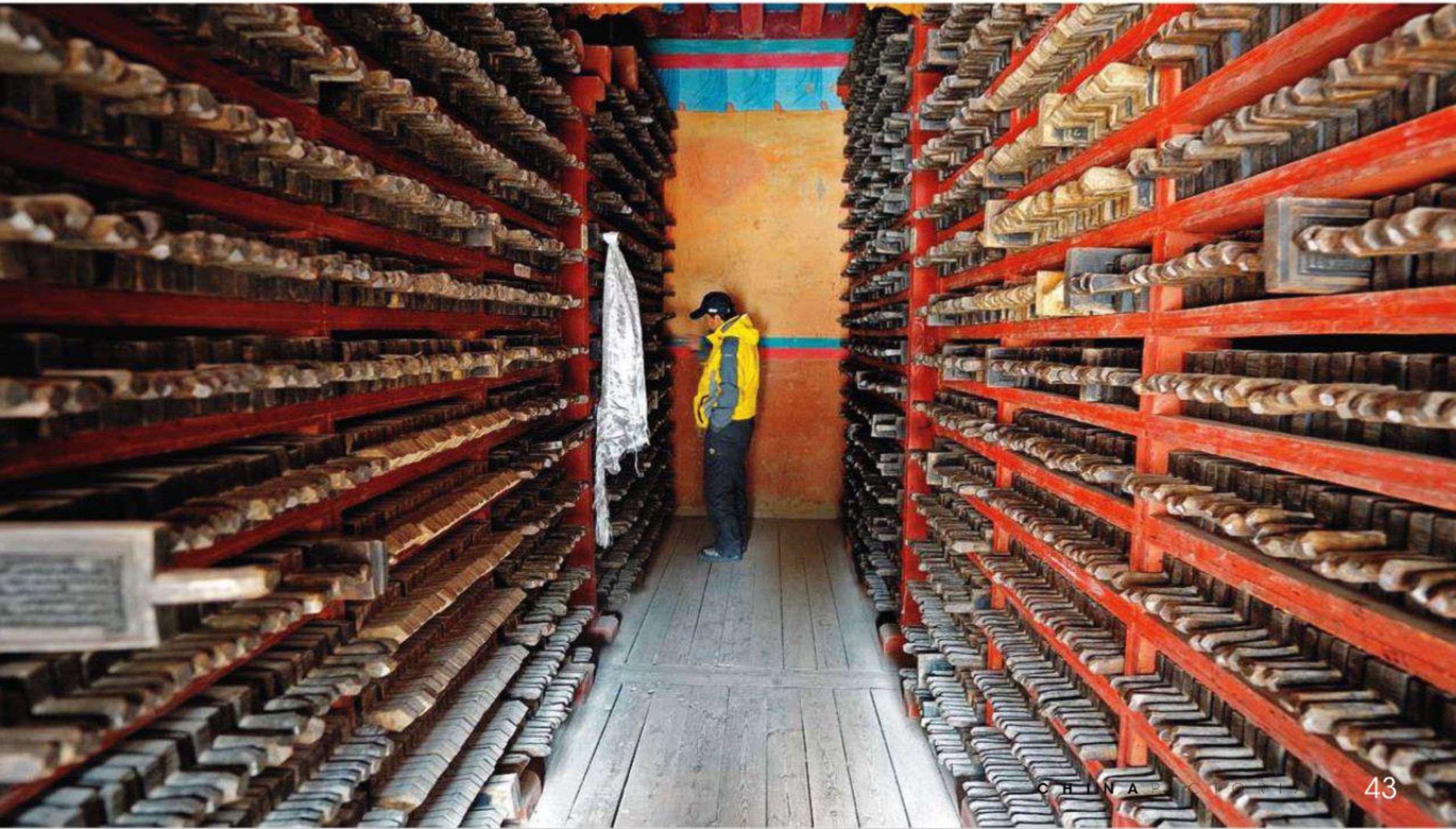
For a moment, we were mesmerized by the impressive scene unfolding before our eyes: Enthusiastic young hands carried on under the supervision of venerated seniors, reverently repeating the timeless ritual while paying homage to each scripture-etched plate. Thanks to these craftsmen and their countless predecessors who have devoted their faith, sweat, and wisdom to the art, the printing house remains unchanged, continuing to spread the fragrance of ink past its walls, fueling the essence of Buddhist doctrine into the souls of the region's followers.

Examining a scripture block preserved at the warehouse.



The printing of each page requires cooperation between two craftsmen.

Scripture blocks have stayed safe in the printing house for centuries.



Floating Obsession

Text and photographs by Sun Shubao

During the height of Nazi attacks on England, Winston Churchill inspired British people by noting that "Kites rise highest against the wind, not with it." His simple imagery could be understood universally due to such a popular hobby.

Kites originated in China, where their first form, constructed of extremely thin wooden chips, floated over the skies of the Warring States period (475BC-221BC). After the invention and utilization of paper during the Han Dynasty (206BC-AD220), it soon became the material of choice for kite-makers, hence the kite's traditional name, *zhiyuan*, literally "paper eagle." About a thousand years later, some Chinese people began tying bamboo whistles to kites to produce zither-like tones, which gave the kite its current Chinese nomenclature, *fengzheng* (wind zither).

Wang Gangshu's kite workshop.

Shandong Province's Weifang is one legendary cradle of the kite. The city was a kite design and production powerhouse during the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties. On sunny days around Qingming (Pure Brightness) Festival in early April, local families soaked up the pleasant spring weather while sending home-crafted kites into the sky, a scene which found its way into still-circulating literary works. This folk custom not only motivated physical exercise in the fresh spring air, but also inspired locals to develop competition for skills related to crafting and flying kites. On April 1, 1984, the Weifang International Kite Festival was born, and the annual event has attracted kite enthusiasts from around the globe ever since. During its sixth edition in 1989, participating associations from 16 countries including Japan, Italy, USA, and UK joined to create the International Kite Federation, which keeps its headquarters in Weifang.

Weifang kites are known for exquisite craftsmanship, novel designs, and eye-catching patterns. Adopting techniques used in woodblock New Year paintings, the devices are often designed with a specific theme in mind, highlighted by graceful lines, bright colors, and exaggerated patterns. Many folk artists devoted to preserving the traditional art form still live and work in Weifang today.

Wang Gangshu, a farmer in Masu Village, began kitemaking with traditional techniques in 1998, and soon his mother and wife joined him. With no access to a proper mentor, Wang was forced to research and study alone. He was lucky enough to receive a set of kite samples from a senior artisan, and he renovated them into six original templates. Over the last 12 years, the familial trio has worked together throughout the entire crafting process, from material selection, bamboo splitting, and model shaping to papering and painting. Thanks to their superb manual dexterity, countless bamboo flyers emerged from their workshop to soar through the skies.

Despite stiff competition from mechanized kite manufacturing and friends' suggestions that he cooperate with a factory to expand his production capabilities through modern technology, Wang still insists on crafting his kites manually.

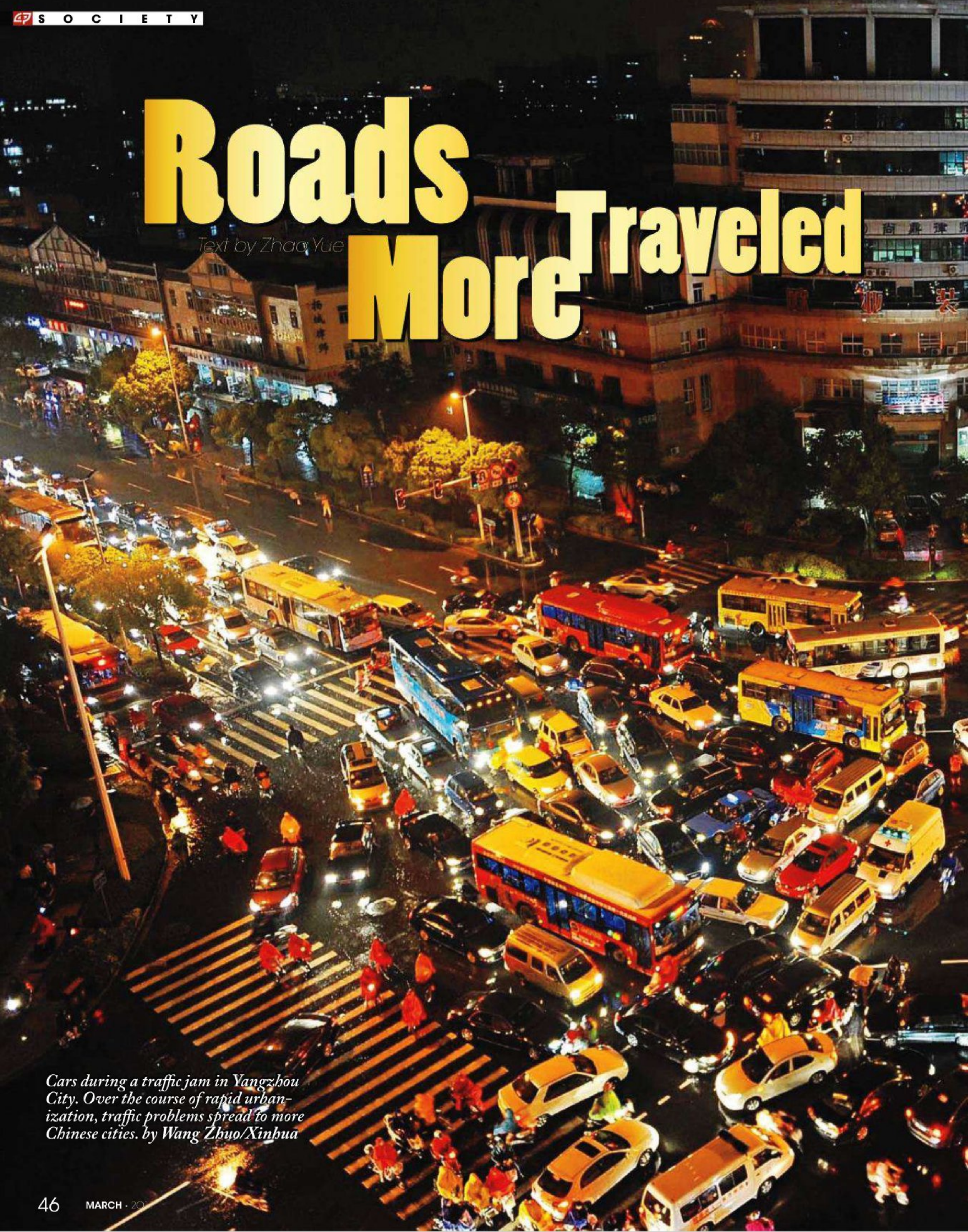
"I'm doing my best to pass on the entire process of traditional craftsmanship," Wang explains. "I've always had a dream that one day I could sell my kites all over the world, so that they can carry my passion to the furthest corners of the planet."

Man-made kites often require a complicated process and multiple tools.

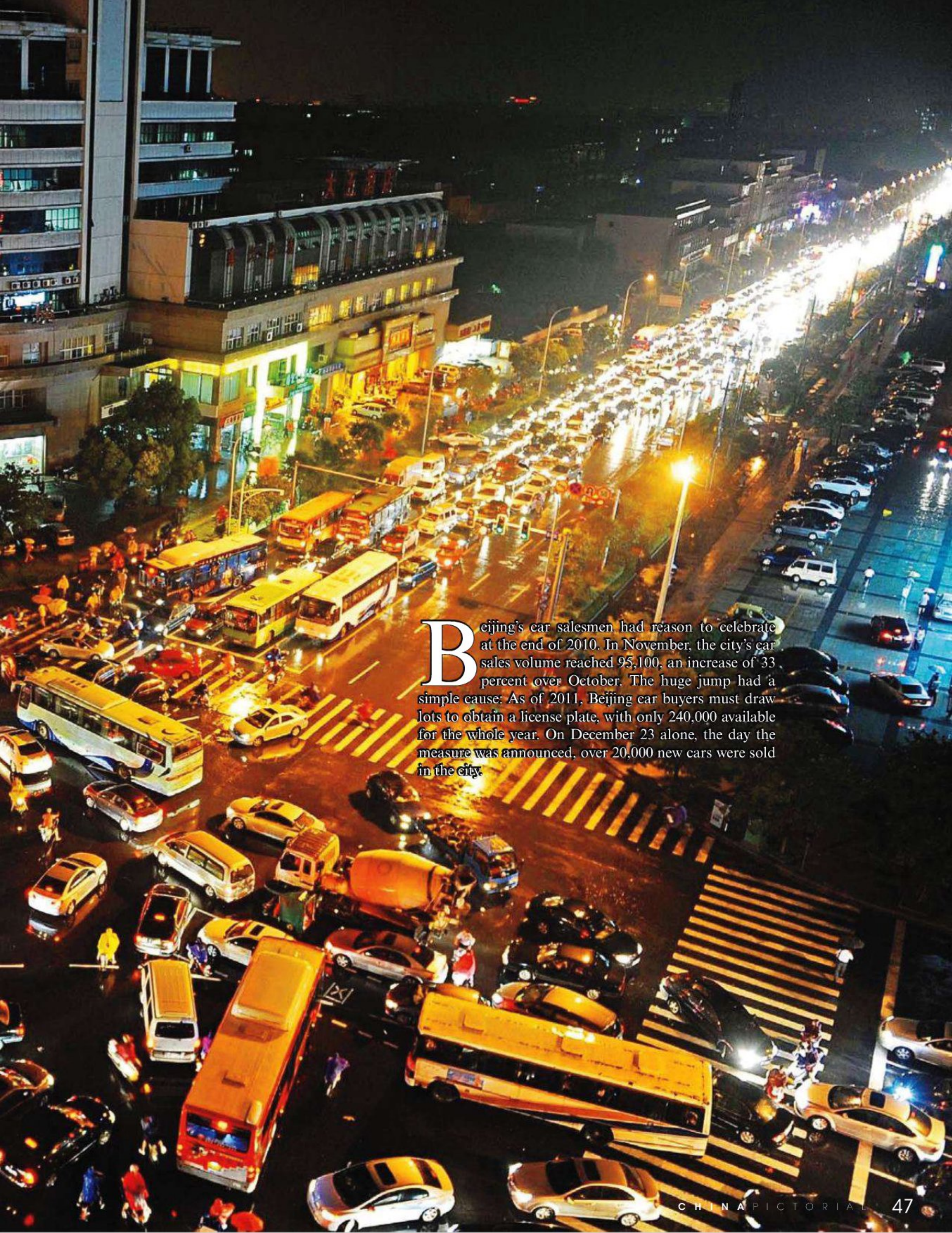
The familial trio works together throughout the entire crafting process.

Roads More Traveled

Text by Zhao Yue



Cars during a traffic jam in Yangzhou City. Over the course of rapid urbanization, traffic problems spread to more Chinese cities. by Wang Zhuo/Xinhua



Beijing's car salesmen had reason to celebrate at the end of 2010. In November, the city's car sales volume reached 95,100, an increase of 33 percent over October. The huge jump had a simple cause: As of 2011, Beijing car buyers must draw lots to obtain a license plate, with only 240,000 available for the whole year. On December 23 alone, the day the measure was announced, over 20,000 new cars were sold in the city.

Traffic Jams

Beijing's morning and evening rush hour traffic jams may be enough to shock many first-time visitors. Covering a distance of 30 kilometers from the suburbs to downtown can consistently take three hours. And on the worst days, a three and a half hour commute isn't out of the question.

Traffic moving from the suburbs to downtown is often horrific, but within downtown areas, it can be just as stomach-turning. The Military Museum Station of Subway Line 1 is located at one of the capital's core areas, and is the nearest metro station to the Beijing West Railway Station. The short two-kilometer trip from the subway to the train station can be torturous for some. Due to oft-gridlocked streets and a shortage of public transportation, some passengers are forced to use unlicensed motorcycles or taxis, or even resort to walking. According to *China Newsweek*, nearly every departing train is missing at least a couple of ticket-holders who failed to arrive on time.

Beijing residents have adapted to the challenge. Crowded subways, buses, and clogged ring roads are not surprises to modern Beijingers, who almost expect to find a traffic jam on any trip. And efforts by municipal officials over the decade have no chance of fixing the situation, but rather delaying total saturation of Beijing's roadways.

"Beijing's traffic congestion demonstrates that the city's roads and vehicular infrastructure can no longer meet the demands of population and automobile growth," remarks Wang Limei, secretary-general of China Road Transport Association.

Reasons

Beijing residents have long noticed that in different parts of the city, transport is not always the top concern among the plentiful issues developers must consider when constructing commercial and residential projects. For example, the Wangjing area, along the north section of Beijing's Fourth Ring Road, is home to 300,000 residents. When it was first developed in the late 1990s, the whole area was serviced by only a single bus line that led to Dongzhimen at the corner of the Second Ring Road. Not until 2003 and the completion of Subway Line 13 was alternate public transport introduced to the area. However, since a subway station could not be constructed in residential areas, most residents must still make a long walk or catch a bus to get to the subway.

Tiantongyuan and Huilongguan, two large residential communities in northern Beijing's Changping District, have the same problem. Huilongguan now is home to more than 300,000 people and Tiantongyuan tallied 400,000 residents in 2009. Despite their large populations, these two communities lacked sufficient public transit for a long time. Subway Line 5, a major rail artery for Tiantongyuan residents, began construction in 2001, but didn't open until 2007. As for Huilongguan, it only began to examine public transit solutions in 2005. Letting public transit take a back seat to property development may

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A normal day in Beijing.
by Wei Yao

be good for the numbers, but definitely not healthy for the sustainable development of a city. According to the Beijing Transportation Research Center, roads account for only 15 percent of the city's land use, much less than the 25 percent international standard.

However, too little land for public transit is not the only problem. Insufficient capital also resulted in the slow construction of Beijing subways. "Generally speaking, investment in a city's public transit should account for more than half of the total transportation infrastructure funds," explains Ma Lin, vice director of City Transit Engineering Center under China's Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development. "However, only before the 2008 Olympics, when Beijing began to frantically build more subways, did the city reach the standard, thanks to the funds from the central government supplementing private financing."

Along with its lagging public transit development, Beijing evolved as an auto-centric city. In 2007, those without a Beijing *hukou* (residential permit) were first allowed to buy cars in the capital. In 2009, the Chinese government halved the sales tax on small-engine cars purchased by first-time buyers. As a result, by the end of 2010, there were 4.8 million private cars in the city.

*Crowded Beijing subway. **Xinhua***

*Registering the transfer of their plates at a vehicle exchange market in Beijing on December 20, 2010. **IC***

Looking Ahead

Beijing has been constantly adopting measures aiming to ease its traffic congestion. In 2004, the city launched the "more core areas" plan. In 2005, policy shifted to developing public transit first. Before the 2008 Games, Beijing began to enforce controversial road space rationing based on plate numbers – a policy that remains in effect today. In 2010, in order to ease congestion in some core areas, parking fees were increased.

In the traffic control package plan announced on December 23, 2010, the municipal government vowed to build road networks in downtown areas, add 400 kilometers of microcirculation roads, construct nine more bus terminals, and increase public buses by 10 percent in 2011. By 2015, light rails in the city should reach 1,000 kilometers. Experts believe that although time is needed to see the full benefits of such measures, Beijing's resolve towards public transit development is clear.

In ancient China, people enjoyed living like the Lao Tzu adage, "I hear your dogs and fowl, but we avoid contact until death." People believed that if everyone managed his own business, the world would naturally function well. However, in modern society, an individual's life and work are more closely tied to others, so abiding by certain codes of conduct became increasingly important. Terry Crossman from New York City has been living in Beijing for 15 years. The American feels that Beijing drivers are ill-tempered. "If I don't change lanes or refuse to cut in line, cars behind will quickly honk at me," he explains. Drivers who only consider their own well-being and ignore traffic rules contribute to the road congestion in Beijing.

Twenty years ago, Chinese people realized that orderly evacuation in queues was the most efficient in times of emergency. Then, the country entered the "queuing age." Now, the country's auto traffic is just in the infant stage of another "queuing age." And in less-congested second and third-tier Chinese cities, traffic remains in the "pre-queuing age."

Already a world-class city in many ways, Beijing is still crawling towards solutions for its traffic problems.

Those Left Behind

Text and photographs by Dong Fang

Social withdrawal is typical among the left-behind children.

New Year's Wish

When the day's classes are over, 4th-grader Mei Yan waits for her "bus" (actually an old tricycle) at her school gate and daydreams. With every passing vehicle, she hopes to see her father or mother's kind eyes, but logic dictates to her that her dreams are merely fantasy. Her parents are far away, and she spends weekends at her grandparents' home.

When she arrives, Mei Yan immediately rushes to the kitchen. But unlike her peers who expect mother's snacks to be waiting, the mature 11-year-old starts preparing dinner herself. Tonight, it's rice and fried chicken with Chinese cabbage for her final dinner of 2010.

"It's New Year's Eve," I remark. "Why don't you have more dishes?"

"What's the difference between today and tomorrow?" She answers my question with another question, like some wise sage. "It's just another day for me. They're all the same when my mother and father are gone. I wish they could come back." And she plops down at the table in sorrow.

Like many buildings in Tiandeng County of the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, Mei Yan's grandparents' home has three stories. The first floor shelters

Working hard in school.

Tending the stove.

livestock, the second floor is the main living area, and the third floor is an open balcony.

Yan's parents first left to work when she was only six. She has considered her life tough since then, but the first year was especially hard. She was rarely able to sleep well or maintain an appetite. She yearned for her parents' embrace so much that rivers of tears were not uncommon.

"I can still remember my mom's hug when she returned home for Spring Festival," she recalls as a single teardrop trickles down her cheek.

As a result of her solitude, Mei Yan psychologically matured before her time, learning to endure the loneliness by closing herself off to others.

And she is certainly not alone. At her school of 440 students, 365 have been left behind by parents who travel elsewhere to work.

"Where are you, mom?"

An ill student waits for his grandpa.

Home Alone

Left-behind children represent a new social phenomenon in China. The term is primarily used to describe rural children whose parents work in urban areas. These children are usually looked after by grandparents or other relatives.

Of the 400,000 total residents of Tiandeng County, 100,000 work elsewhere, leaving more than 36,000 children parentless – 52 percent of total students. The tally of left-behind pre-school children has now exceeded 17,500.

Without parents by their side for the vast majority of their days, these children have fewer guarantees for a normal life, particularly at school. Most must perform housework after school or even other labor, so it's no surprise that their dropout rate is considerably higher than normal. Some even quit school so that they can join their parents.

Yun Ying is another example.

Her school performance has been excellent on paper, but she remains frequently sullen compared to her peers. "Ying is stubborn, unsocial, and gloomy," claims her teacher. "She usually avoids interacting with her classmates."

Yun Ying tends to avoid the question when people ask where her mother is. She was five when her parents first left, and since then, she has stayed with her 70-year-old grandmother. Over time, she stopped talking so much and began spending more time lying in bed, gazing at pictures of her parents.

As China's rapid economic progress creates a wealth of opportunity in urban areas, more former farmers are lured to cities by greater earning potential. But lost in the fray is the new underage rural demographic, which has emerged as an increasingly prominent social problem.

The children are deserted at a critical stage of growth, when they need special care and attention from their parents. It doesn't take a psychologist to realize that a lack of parental affection over such long periods of time can lead to abnormal social development.

Concerns

A recent survey estimates that currently in China, 24.4 million children have been left behind by both parents, with an additional 33.6 million missing one, bringing the total count past 58 million. Eighty percent of these children are cared for by grandparents, 13 percent by other relatives or friends, and 7 percent live otherwise or on their own.

A hardened child behind the smiling face.

The most prominent concerns are related to psychological development. Long periods of inadequate parenting frequently results in a loss of healthy characteristics, causing many children to feel alone, depressed, and upset at being abandoned.

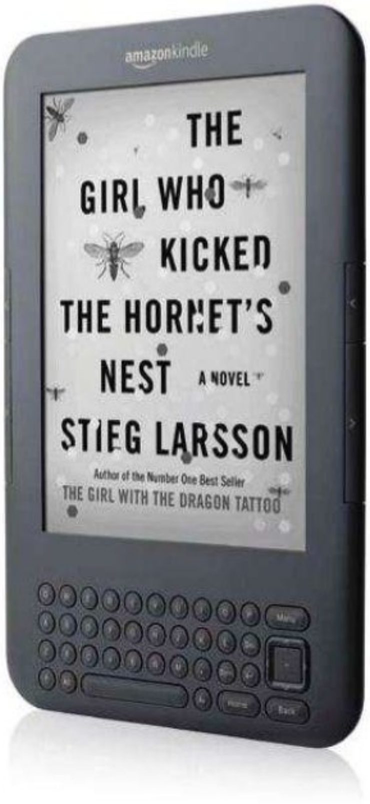
A 2010 analysis report on this demographic issued by the All-China Women's Federation illustrated the frequency of contact between migrant working parents and their children: 33 percent have contact once a day, 40 percent once a week, 21 percent once a month, 5 percent only once a year, and 1.3 percent have zero contact.

Mei Yan and a friend.

Other concerns include higher dropout rates and personal safety.

Over the last few years, such concerns have stirred attention from around the country. Measures have been taken to aid these children. For instance, the local government of Tiandeng invested 1.95 million yuan to establish a 2,000-square-meter youth center to enrich their spare time, 66 boarding schools, and 95 kindergartens for 35,000 left-behind pre-school children in over 40 villages. Some of the provincial and municipal governments have also added special provisions to intensify the protection of young demographics, including the left-behind.

Nevertheless, the fundamental problem is far from solved. In the future, obstacles preventing rural children from attending schools in cities where their parents work must be tackled, allowing them treatment equal to their urban peers.



The Amazon Kindle in an undated promotional image. CFP

Saving the Trees

New Reading Habits in the E-era

Text by Zhao Yue

It is "ecstasy for readers and a disaster for publishers," remarked Liu Yingjian, Chairman of Hanvon Company, when introducing his 2008 product, WISEreader – China's first E-book reader.

Liu draws much of his confidence from the success of Amazon, the world's largest online bookseller and e-tailer. When the company launched Kindle in 2007, its intention was only to boost online book sales, and they never imagined how popular the wireless reading device would become. In 2010, the sales volume of Amazon's e-books surpassed its paper books. For every 100 hard-copies sold, customers purchased 143 e-books.

Large crowds were drawn to e-readers during the 2010 China International Communication Exposition, Beijing. CFP

Chinese shoppers check out iPads on display at Apple's Beijing flagship store. CFP

Popularity of E-books

"Before Kindle was officially launched in China, I already got one from a friend working overseas," smiles 32-year-old exporter Li Tongyu. "Actually, I love reading paper books, and I just bought Kindle because it was so trendy. But when I began to use it, I found the device more practical than I previously imagined."

Like Li, many Chinese readers were first pessimistic about e-book reading devices. However, after actually holding the device, realizing its weight and dimensions weren't much different than a real book, many began to shuttle around the city with the contraption, reveling in its convenience.

Kindle's success brings new hope to its Chinese peers. Many big-name brands such as Founder Technology Group and China Mobile threw their hat into the mix, hoping to snatch a share of the huge cake. By early 2010, there were more than 80 enterprises worldwide producing or developing e-book readers, including 41 from the Chinese mainland and three from Hong Kong and Taiwan.

Hanvon, a pioneer in China's e-book industry, has been notably successful so far. In 2009, with a sales volume of 270,000, Hanvon's WISEreader gobbled up 90 percent of the market share in China, solidifying its leading position. In 2010, the e-book giant went public on ChiNext, China's NASDAQ-style board. The IPO boosted shares from 41.9 to 77 yuan on the first day. Only 82 days later, Hanvon's share price had climbed to 175 yuan. The success inspired Liu Yingjian to aim to put his firm on the Global Fortune 500 list.

On September 17, 2010, iPad, which includes an e-reader, debuted on the mainland. It sold out in just 10 days, and remaining throngs of eager would-be customers caused some Apple stores in Beijing and Shanghai to close for a few days. "With iPad, you can use the internet, view video, and write e-mail," explains 28-year-old user Hu Ying. "And most importantly, along with it, you get the iBook store, which sells a wealth of e-books with interactive features."

New methods of reading and innovative products help create a promising new market for many Chinese publishers and electronics manufacturers.

New Marketing Mode

Some believe that traditional reading habits involving paper books cannot be easily changed. However, consider how quickly people turned to keyboards from writing on paper, and how quickly CDs disappeared once downloading music became easy.

With the rapid development of e-readers, even China Mobile, China's largest mobile phone network, is banking on the firm's future growth in the market. On May 5, 2010, it announced the launch of its cell phone reading service. The company offered its subscribers 3G wireless access to online publications, including digital books, comics, newspapers and magazines. The service will be available for both cell phones and e-readers.

As for the content, China Mobile is cooperating with various organizations, including publishers such as The Writers Publishing House and Hubei Changjiang Press Group, websites such as qidian.com and sina.com.cn, and institutes such as the National Library of China. According to China Mobile, their partners will provide content, while they develop the online platform, research products, and market the service. The company is using a 60-40 split between carrier and content providers, respectively. It would be a huge step in the development of the industry because in the past e-reader manufacturers who needed content lacked a clear profit-sharing model with which to negotiate with providers.

China Mobile has also developed a new method to motivate Chinese customers – who may not be used to paying for software and service – to open their wallets. Now, the company offers two ways of reading e-books. Customers can either pay for one book at a time or opt for a monthly subscription fee. According to the content, the fee for downloading a book varies from 1 to 10 yuan. Customers can even choose to pay for chapters, with prices ranging from 0.04 to 0.12 yuan. As for the monthly subscription fee, customers can choose between 3-yuan and 5-yuan packages depending on their needs. The 5-yuan package offers about 50 books. Customers don't have to pay extra for reading books, and the flat fee is simply added to their mobile bills.

An Emerging Chinese Market

However, the Chinese market for e-books is still young.

In limbo between traditional paper publishers and e-book operators, content providers are still cautiously debating which digital content they will provide. Even large companies like Hanvon have a limited selection of titles.

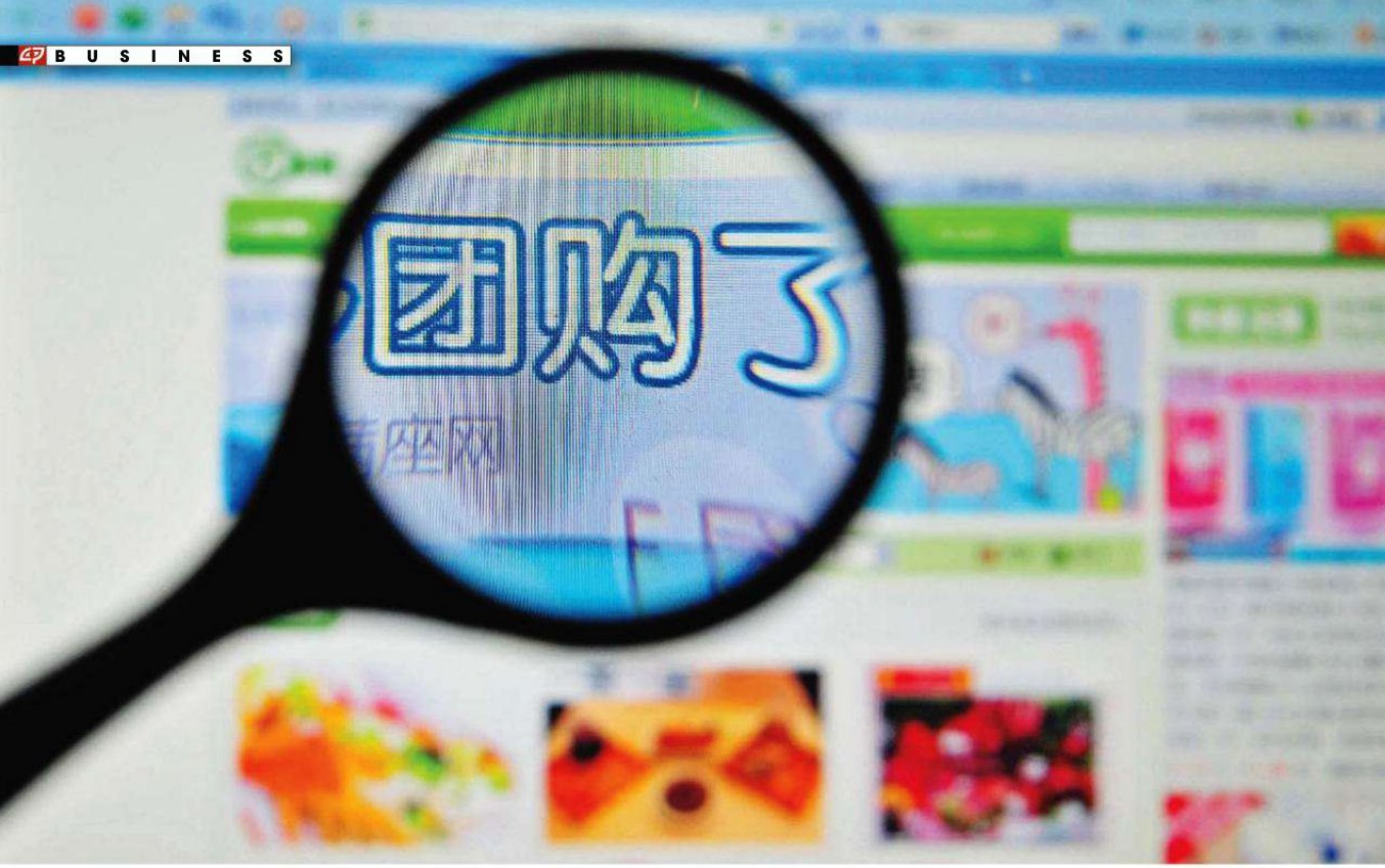
Price and piracy are another two factors hindering the development of e-books in China. Compared to foreign markets, China's paper books are more affordable, so e-books have a tougher time under-cutting them with price. Also, pirated content is constantly a headache for those employed in the trade. "Pirated publications already make paper publishers suffer," remarks Shen Haobo, president of Motie Publishing House. "With the inherent advantages of digitalization, they can more easily smother e-publishers in the future."

Because of this situation, China's General Administration of Press and Publication released *Proposals on the Development of E-book Industry* in October 2010. "With all proposals and factors considered, the e-book industry will grow larger with intensive management," explains Liu Bofeng, an e-book industrial analyst. "Industry competitors must remember that content is always the priority. Only those who attach enough importance on content will climb the industrial ladder."

电子书阅读器
E-Readers

Various e-readers. IC

In recent years, many enterprises have launched e-book readers, hoping to snatch a share of the huge cake. IC



Power in Numbers

Text by Liu Haile

Sha Meng, a Beijing IT firm employee, is included in the so-called "80s" demographic (those born between 1980 and 1989). Every morning when he turns on his computer, he first checks several "team-buy" websites, scouring them for a bargain. In the eyes of his friends and colleagues, Sha is a textbook group buying enthusiast.

Discount Lure

On the front page of Meituan.com, one of China's largest group-buy websites, a plethora of products and services are advertised at tremendous discounts: A pair of shoes retailing at 298 yuan are offered for only 69 yuan to team buyers. A youth photography package worth 1,880 yuan is listed at 480. A buffet for four valued at 818 yuan sells for only 258. Spa service normally priced at 398 goes for 158… Every great deal is highly attractive to eyes such as Sha Meng's.

"Last April, Meituan.com joined with a new movie theater to offer a discount deal," Sha recalls. "Group buyers could pay 39 yuan for two tickets that originally went for 168 yuan, with popcorn and Coke included. For that price, I was able to take my girlfriend to *Alice in Wonderland* in 3D right when it opened in China." That pleasant experience ignited his passion for group buying. Sha estimates that online group buying cuts his entertainment and dining costs by at least half.

The growing popularity of group-buy websites testifies to the rise of the trend in large Chinese cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Shenzhen. Statistics show that the majority of buyers are between the ages of 25 and 35. Prices are always better in bulk, and due to the huge numbers of potential buyers, vendors are willing to slash prices as much as 95 percent to make big sales. Such savings are the most powerful attraction luring even more consumers to the sites.

Online Group Buying Boom

Getting better prices by making purchases together isn't an entirely new concept. However, the ability to do so online with the help of a website has only recently emerged, and the concept quickly spread throughout the cyber world.

Groupon, which can be traced all the way back to 2008, is widely deemed the original online group buying portal. Its business model is simple: If enough people agree to buy something, they will all get a big discount. Just 18 months after its inception, the company was valued at US$1.35 billion, and Forbes named it the "fastest growing company ever" in internet history. In November 2010, Google made a US$6 billion bid to acquire Groupon. "As the forerunner of online group buying, Groupon attracted even more attention than other fast-growing web companies such as Twitter and Facebook," comments Fang Yingzhi, an analyst from China e-Business Research Center (CBRC). "This is not only because of its simple business model, but also due to its effectiveness in creating profits."

Groupon represents one of the most successful B2C business models, enabling quick profit-grabbing through bridging retailers to big chunks of buyers. It was no surprise when the "Groupon model" quickly spread around the globe.

China's group buying industry emerged only in March of 2010 along with the first group-buy sites such as Meituan and Lashou, which are now among the nation's largest of their kind. According to statistics released by CBRC, over a period of only three months, the count of Chinese group-buy websites skyrocketed to 485. The *2010 China e-Business Market Monitoring Report* released on January 24, 2011, showed that at the end of 2010, there were 1,880 functioning group-buy sites in addition to 713 that were already shut down.

"The group-buy site boom is largely due to low start-up costs," explained Chen Shousong from Analysys International, one of China's leading internet solutions providers, in a 2010 interview. "A few people with several computers have the capability of creating a group-buy website with as little capital as 10,000 yuan. The monumental success of Groupon only fuels the entrepreneurial flames."

Discount Traps

Along with the exponential growth of group-buy websites in China, related problems have slowly surfaced. Poor product quality, lack of post-sale service, and a complicated complaint process have plagued some buyers who attempted to find better deals on the internet. Even the nation's most popular sites are not immune to such problems. When being seduced by precipitous discounts offered by group-buy sites, for now, customers must be aware of possible pitfalls.

China Central Television reported on the fraud of 1288, one of China's earliest group-buy sites. More than 150 victims organized an online rights claim group. A Wuxi woman known as "Shoushou" on the net is among

美团 meituan.com
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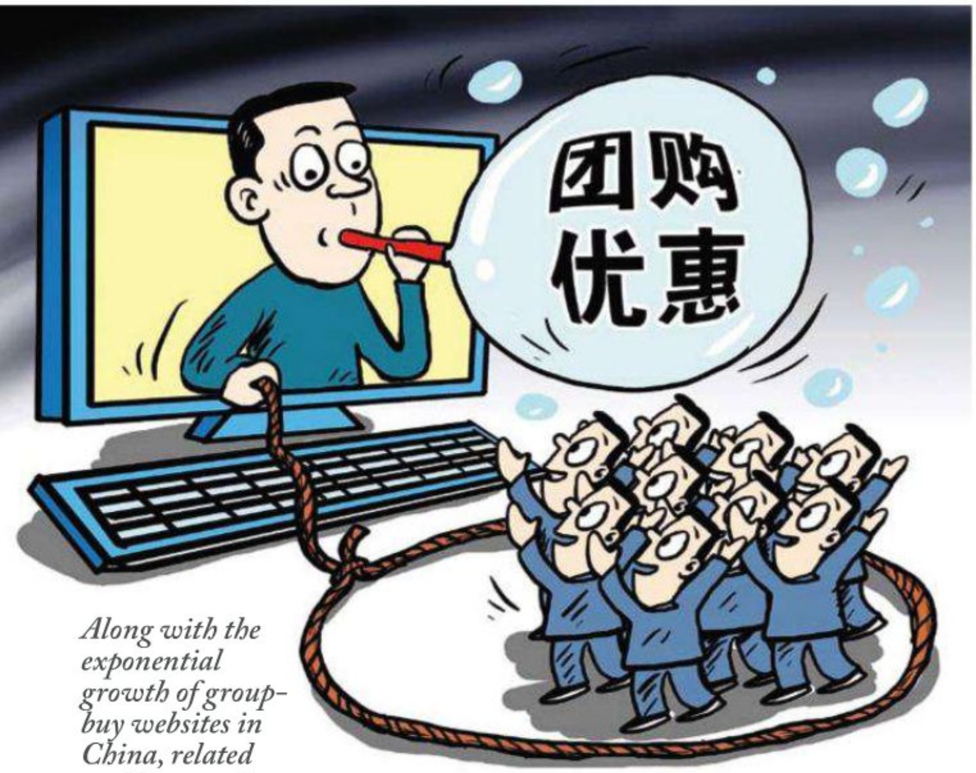
Discount catering is very popular on group-buy websites. CFP



Along with the exponential growth of group-buy websites in China, related problems, such as online fraud, have gradually surfaced. ***CFP***

them. In May 2010, she found that 1288 was offering pairs of South Korean shoes valued at 531 yuan for only 65 yuan. "Lured by the discount price, I placed an order," she recalls. "But, I didn't get the shoes by the time the website guaranteed. When I visited the site on June 8, it claimed to have been the victim of a cyber-attack and my money had been returned to my online account, however I still couldn't withdraw it." Days later, she found that the website was permanently closed.

To counter e-commerce fraud, China International Electronic Commerce Center under the Chinese Ministry of Commerce issued China's first *Regulations on E-Commerce Credit Certification* on October 29, 2010, with rules pertaining to both B2B and B2C businesses, including group-buy sites. Sites that pass certification can get an e-tag, through which users can check their reliability ratings.

Additionally, industry insiders have called for self-discipline by group-buy websites and their suppliers. Not long ago, CBRC joined with 100 Chinese group-buy websites such as Lashou, 55tuan, and Ftuan to establish the China Honest Group Buying Alliance, aiming to promote the industry's integrity and healthy development.

"The online group buying industry not only enables customers to purchase products and services at substantial discounts, but also provides an effective, cheap online platform for vendors to display and sell their commodities," remarks CBRC director Cao Lei. "All we need is to keep it on the right track with rational regulation."

Statistics show that the majority of online group buyers are between the ages of 25 and 35. ***IC***

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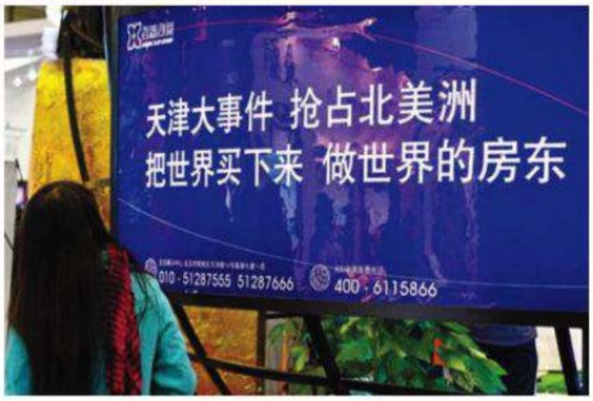
Homes Away From Home

Text by Liu Haile

Not long ago, *The New York Times* published a report titled "Chinese Investors Flock to London for Real Estate," which triggered global awareness about the trend of Chinese investments in overseas real estate markets.

Surging Demands

Reporters from *The New York Times* interviewed Naomi Minegishi, a Japanese woman who lived in China for 10 years before taking a job with a London real estate agency. Her most valued skill was not related to real estate experience, but rather language ability. She is fluent in Mandarin, an increasingly valuable ability in London's residential real estate market because more and more investors from the Chinese mainland are flocking to the city to invest in real estate. With Minegishi's help, the agency sold four apartments in a new development for US$500,000, each to different Chinese buyers. "Chinese clients are a dream," Minegishi smiled. "They are wealthy and pay in cash."



An international property company's billboard attracts the attention of visitors at Beijing Winter Real Estate Fair. CFP

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November 2010: Several overseas real estate companies display their projects at Beijing International Finance Expo. CFP

According to some brokers, the London real estate market might have shown signs of slowing recently, but investors from China's mainland and Hong Kong are busier than ever in European investing. In some parts of London, Chinese investors have already replaced those from Russia and the Middle East as the busiest foreign real estate buyers with deepest pockets, digging for trophy assets and pushing up prices. Some London developers have even started omitting the number four in new buildings because it is considered unlucky in Chinese culture.

The surging demand from Chinese buyers has drawn attention from real estate developers and brokers worldwide. On December 17, 2010, the First China Overseas Real Estate Festival kicked off in Shanghai, where dozens of foreign real estate developers and brokers from Australia, Canada, Britain, Japan, Malaysia, South Korea, and the United States presented high-end opportunities targeting Chinese investors. Meanwhile, at the 2010 Luxury Properties Showcase, held in Beijing from December 10 to 12, many internationally renowned developers from all over, such as Niseko Alpine Developments and Carlton International, publicized their work.

Over the past six months, Chinese investors were active in real estate markets around the globe. At the Shanghai Overseas Real Estate Festival, an Australian broker declared that over a recent period, purchasers from Shanghai totaled receipts of 100 million yuan, a figure more than that from any other foreign country, buying dozens of luxury houses in the Gold Coast, a premier tourist area of Australia.

A US real estate company appears at the Third China International Luxury Property Show held in Shanghai. CFP

A survey conducted by *Real Estate Evening News* of Shanghai Television Station revealed that Chinese investors' favorite overseas real estate markets include Australia, Canada, Singapore, the United States, Malaysia, Britain, South Korea, Japan, and New Zealand. The organizing committee of the Shanghai Overseas Real Estate Festival estimated that in January 2011, nearly 100 Chinese investors would travel in groups to seek investment properties in those countries.

Outbound Buyers

It is commonplace for wealthy Chinese to buy overseas real estate solely on the basis of photos and floor plans. Some even pay cash for the full amount when purchasing several apartments at once. This makes Chinese buyers the ideal customers for overseas property brokers. So, what kind of Chinese buyers are active in overseas real estate markets, and why are they so interested?

Statistics show that the majority intend to apply for investment immigration programs. For the needs related to international business expansion or improved standard of living and educational opportunities, some of the Chinese elite buy real estate in foreign countries to which they plan to immigrate. Not only will they have a place to stay after settling in a new country, but the property can be included as part of their investment portfolio for immigration requirements.

Over the past a few years, the Chinese real estate market has witnessed a substantial boom, from which many investors earned considerable returns. Now, they are setting their sights on overseas markets perceived as more profitable. Instead of buying dwellings intended for personal use, savvier investors aim to receive rent or resell.

Motivating Factors

In 2008, the price of real estate in many Western countries saw an extraordinary decline triggered by the global economic downturn and subprime lending crisis. However, this created a great opportunity for Chinese investors to buy abnormally cheap real estate abroad.

"Many countries are seeing a collapse of housing value against the backdrop of global economic recession," remarked Professor Chen Zhanyun from Shanghai University in an interview with Phoenix TV at the Shanghai Overseas Real Estate Festival. "For instance, 2011 marks the 20th consecutive year that the price of Japan's real estate declined, which has attracted many investors from other Asian countries to flock to the country seeking long-term investment opportunities in its real estate market."

Over years of fast growth, real estate prices in China have risen to unprecedented highs. Nowadays, housing prices in large Chinese metropolises like Beijing and Shanghai are comparable to many developed countries. According to Professor Chen, apartment space averages 40,000 yuan per square meter in Singapore, and local banks offer foreign purchasers home loans for as much as 70 percent of the price of the property they buy, with an annual interest rate of two percent. Apartments around Toronto, Canada, are priced at about 20,000 yuan per square meter, and immigrants are allowed to apply for home loans for as much as 65 percent of the house price. Apartments in less developed areas of Australia also cost only 20,000 yuan per square meter, while those in large cities like Sidney and Melbourne go for 50,000-60,000 yuan per square meter. Such figures are attractive to Chinese investors who have seen Chinese property values rise to unprecedented levels already.

Since 2009, the Chinese government has promulgated a series of policies aiming to prevent its real estate market from experiencing the same burst. Some Chinese cities even issued strict regulations to limit the number of houses that each family can buy. Zhuang Nuo, media planning head of China's real estate portal Soufun.com, fears that more constraints on the red-hot local property market could further push Chinese investors to turn to overseas markets. Additionally, Renminbi appreciation and the increasing demands of overseas Chinese students are contributing factors to the phenomenon.

Behind the Trend

Liang Jianli, board chairman of the international property broker Premier Capital Group, offered a conservative estimate that Chinese purchases of overseas real estate via property brokers reached 5 billion yuan in 2010, and that figure doesn't include transactions completed by purchasers themselves.

Chinese investors' increasing demand for overseas real estate is yet another testament of China's rapid economic growth and the growing wealth of its people. In its report, *The New York Times* commented that the increase highlights a gradual shift of wealth to Asia, including China. The region's booming growth has catapulted many into the ranks of the wealthy. In Chinese mainland alone, the number of people with assets of more than 10 million yuan rose to 875,000 in 2010, according to the Hurun Research Institute in Shanghai. The wealthy constitute the majority of Chinese investors who buy foreign real estate.

However, industry insiders caution Chinese investors to be aware of possible risks of buying houses abroad. "Both appreciation and depreciation of the Renminbi will affect the value of the real estate they buy abroad," says Xiao Feng, vice president of a property developer. "Potential change in foreign exchange rates should be taken into account when estimating the risk of overseas investments." Chen Guoqiang, director of Peking University Real Estate Research Institute, points out that returns from investments in overseas markets are usually lower than the Chinese market. "For example, the United States' real estate market saw a substantial downturn during the global financial crisis, and it will take some time to recover," Chen explains. "If they want to buy real estate in the United States, Chinese investors must not expect to cash-in their investments within a short period." According to a report in *World Journal*, the largest Chinese-language newspaper in North America, it is now easy for a Chinese investor to buy a house in the United States, but it isn't as easy to keep it because the owner must pay property tax equal to 1-3 percent of the value of the house annually. For rental properties, owners must pay fees totaling about 5-10 percent of rental income. Chinese investors should be aware of those regulations before investing overseas.

Although doubt remains as to whether Chinese investors are ready to be landlords of the world, China Index Academy, an independent business research institute in China, estimates that a total of US$ 10 billion in private investments will flow from China to overseas markets within next three years, at least half of which will be used to purchase real estate.

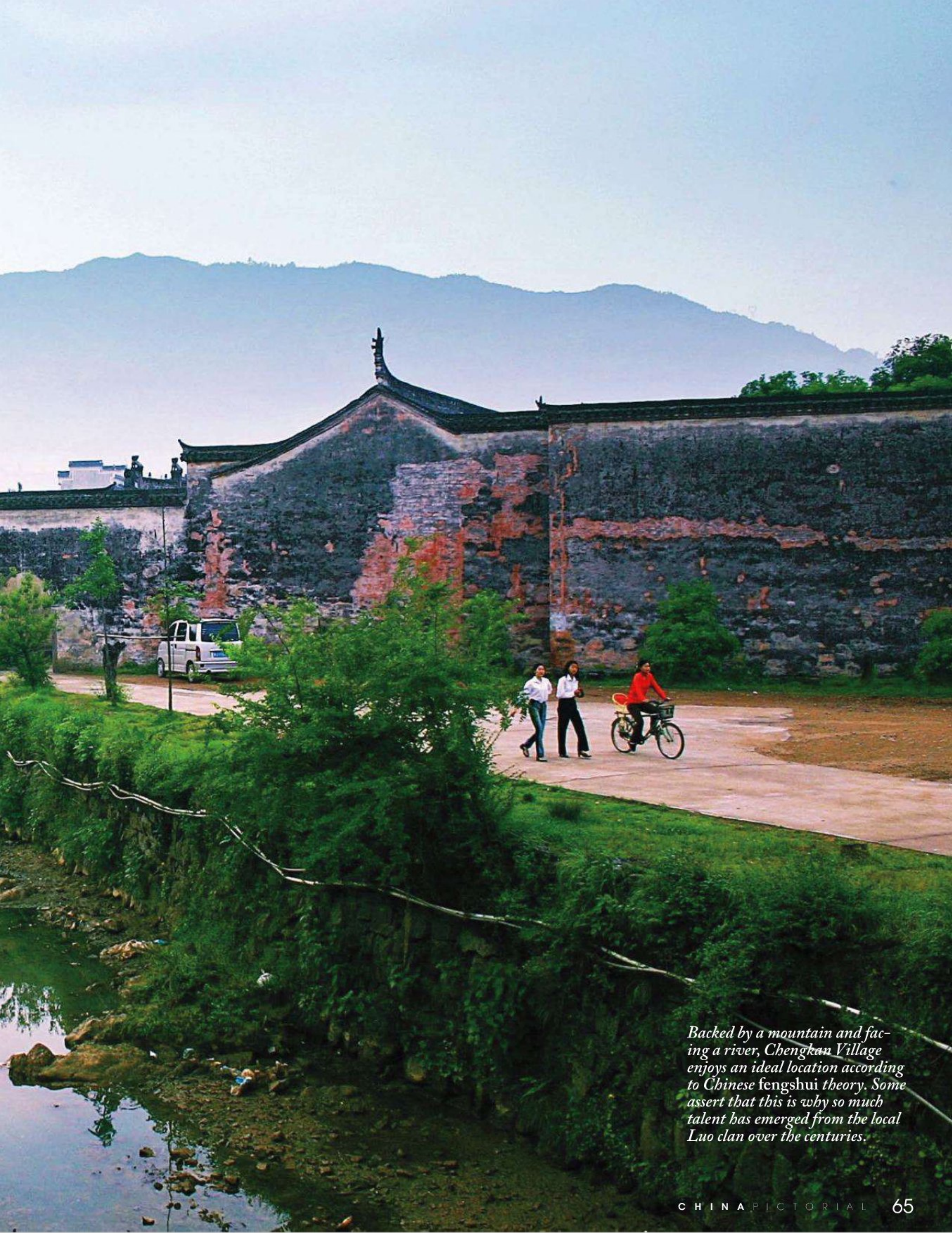
The first travel group of Chinese buyers who attempted to buy real estate in the United States, organized by China's noted real estate internet portal Soufun, attracted the attention of news reporters before they departed from Beijing at Capital International Airport. ***CFP***

The Elder Village

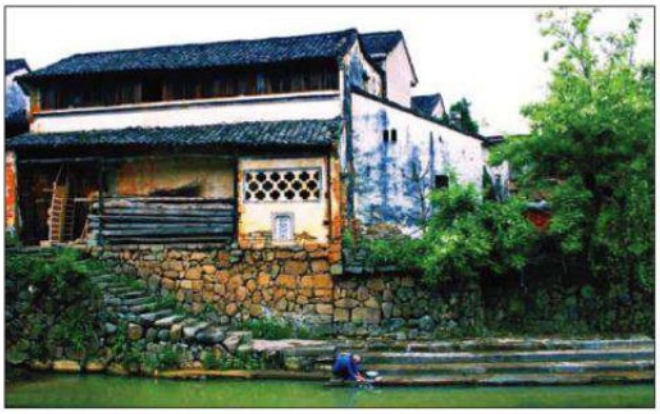
Text and photographs by Lin Dihuan

A weathered stone balustrade.

I once read a newspaper story covering Zhouzhuang, one of southern China's most famous historic towns, accompanied by a picture illustrating the bustling local tourism. The picture showed the renowned Double Bridges full of camera-toting tourists led by flag-bearing guides with megaphones in hand. Every boat passing under the bridges was also packed. Actually, such a scene is not uncommon in China's tourist hotspots during peak seasons.



Backed by a mountain and facing a river, Chengkan Village enjoys an ideal location according to Chinese fengshui *theory. Some assert that this is why so much talent has emerged from the local Luo clan over the centuries.*



A woman washes cloths in a river flowing through the historic village.

In the late spring of 2010, I traveled alone to Anhui Province. It was nearing the May 1st holiday when I arrived in Tunxi District, the government seat of Huangshan City. The streets were crowded with noisy vendors and tourists coming to visit the famous Huangshan Mountain. Without hesitation, I fled the boisterous town to nearby Shexian, a small, ancient county that offered a peaceful, comfortable afternoon. The next day, I opted to visit another locale with similar tranquility.

A local friend recommended Chengkan, which was praised as the "first village south of the Yangtze River" by Zhu Xi, a prestigious scholar of the Song Dynasty (960-1279). However, I wondered if the small, remote village still deserved such a haughty reputation.

Despite my doubts, I hopped on a minibus to Chengkan early in the morning. As the vehicle neared it, the road became more and more rugged.

The moment I arrived, the village and surrounding croplands were still shrouded in thick morning haze, which added an air of mystery. I discussed with the driver a time to pick me up and left the car. The air was fresh and wet, and I began feeling as if the old village had been waiting for me for centuries. Although the calendar claimed it was the height of the tourist season, only a few other visitors could be found. I was pleasantly surprised at the lack of souvenir stands at the entrance to the village, which is unlike most of China's tourist destinations.

Travel Tips

How to Get There

Situated in Huizhou District of Huangshan City, in eastern China's Anhui Province, Chengkan Village is about 10 kilometers away from Yansi Town. A taxi from downtown Huangshan to Chengkan will cost about 80 yuan. A bus also runs to Yansi Town, from which minibuses service Chengkan.

Where to Stay

Chengkan's many family-owned hotels offer rooms for only 20-30 yuan per night and homemade food. Tourists can also find star-rated hotels in downtown Huangshan.

What to See

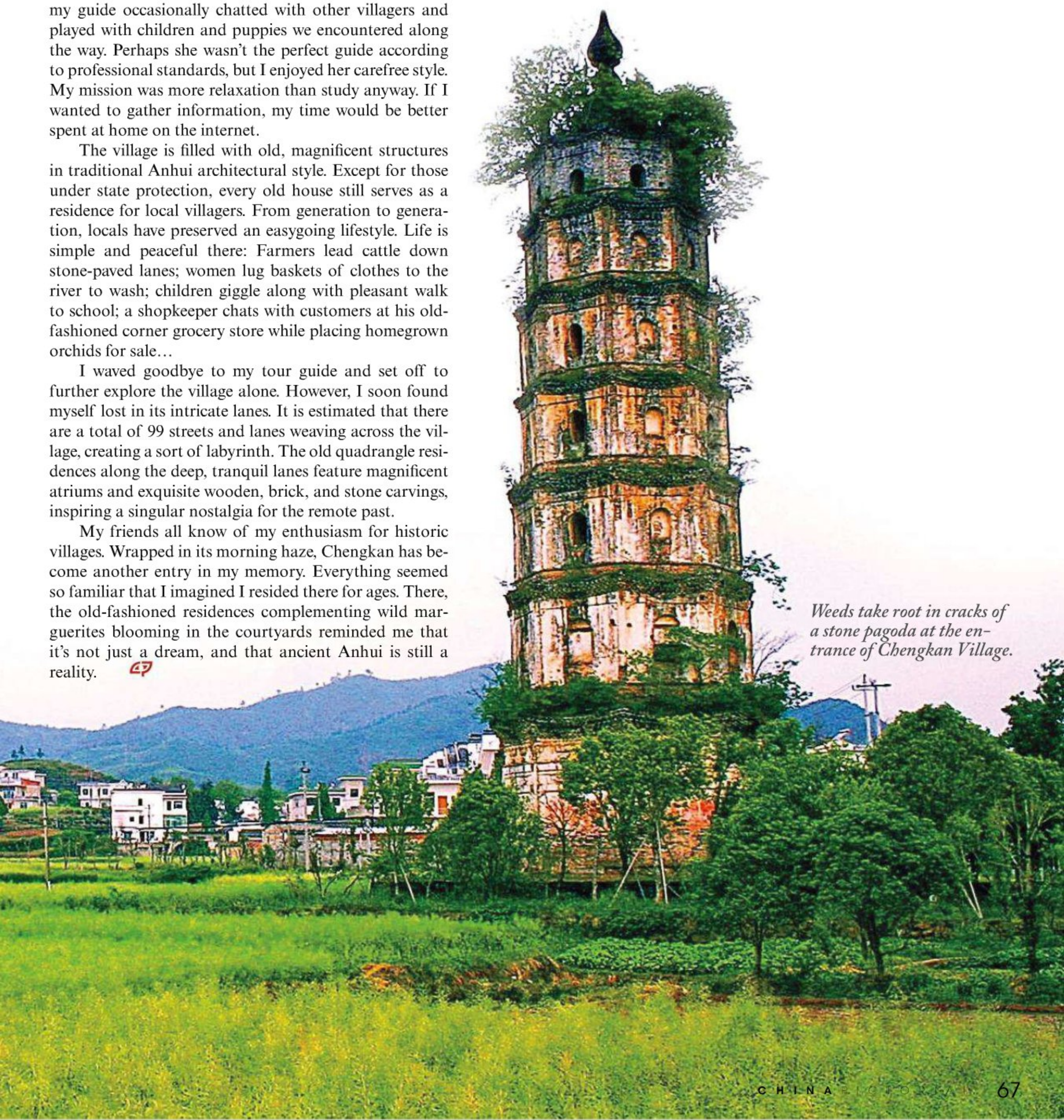
Originally called Longxi, Chengkan Village has a history of more than 1,800 years. It is considered southern Anhui's oldest and most mysterious village featuring a layout of the Eight Diagrams pattern. Historically, the village seldom witnessed warfare due to its secluded location. So, it preserves more than 140 historic buildings including memorial temples, watchtowers, stone bridges, and traditional residences, of which more than 20 are under state-class protection.

Before my visit, I didn't know much about the historic village which was constructed according to Chinese *feng-shui* theory – except that it was home to many influential Anhui merchant clans and classical structures ranging from the Yuan (1271-1368) and Ming (1368-1644) to the Qing (1644-1911) Dynasty. So, I hired a local girl to be my guide. However, she didn't seem to know much more than me. While introducing me to the village's scenic spots, my guide occasionally chatted with other villagers and played with children and puppies we encountered along the way. Perhaps she wasn't the perfect guide according to professional standards, but I enjoyed her carefree style. My mission was more relaxation than study anyway. If I wanted to gather information, my time would be better spent at home on the internet.

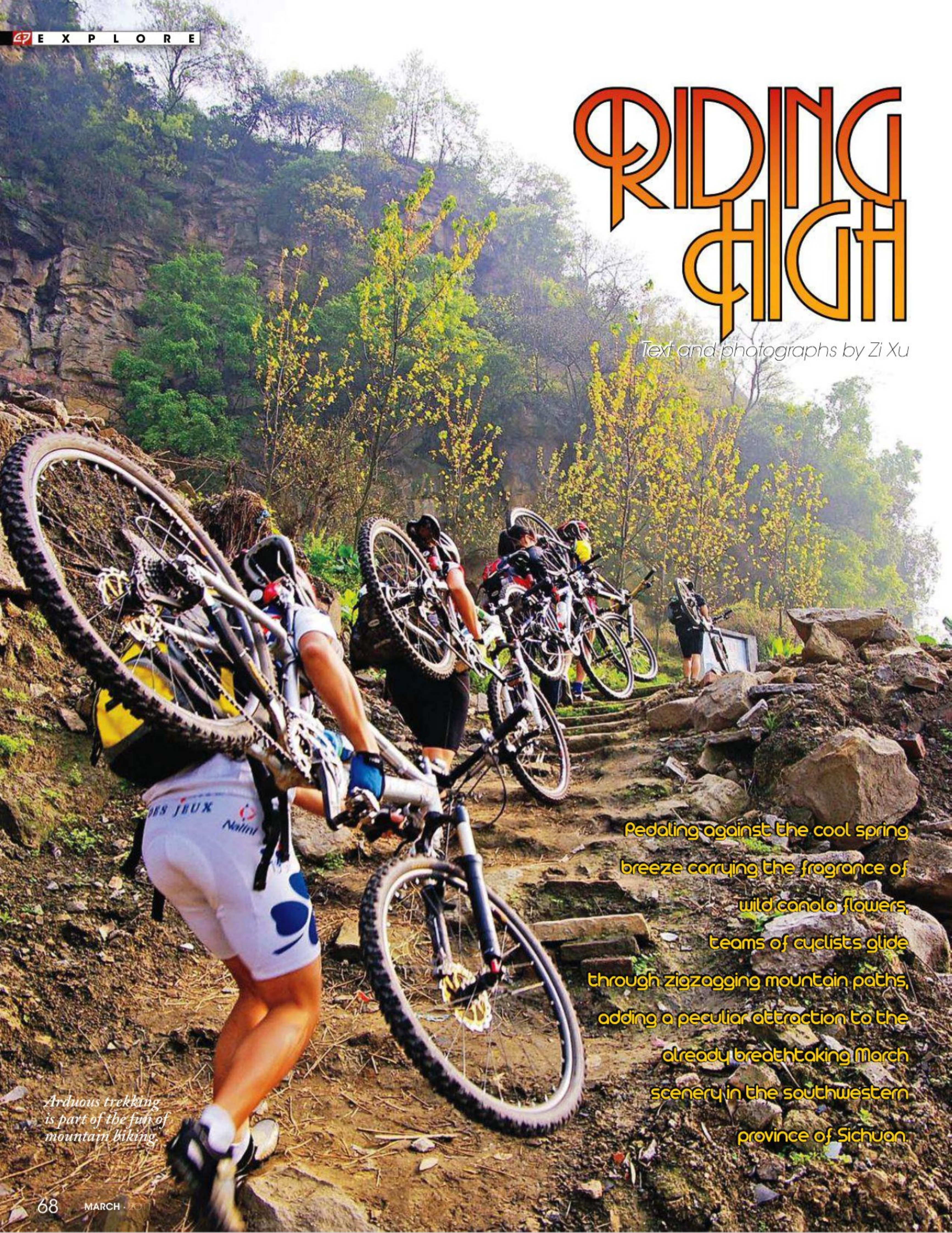
The village is filled with old, magnificent structures in traditional Anhui architectural style. Except for those under state protection, every old house still serves as a residence for local villagers. From generation to generation, locals have preserved an easygoing lifestyle. Life is simple and peaceful there: Farmers lead cattle down stone-paved lanes; women lug baskets of clothes to the river to wash; children giggle along with pleasant walk to school; a shopkeeper chats with customers at his old-fashioned corner grocery store while placing homegrown orchids for sale…

I waved goodbye to my tour guide and set off to further explore the village alone. However, I soon found myself lost in its intricate lanes. It is estimated that there are a total of 99 streets and lanes weaving across the village, creating a sort of labyrinth. The old quadrangle residences along the deep, tranquil lanes feature magnificent atriums and exquisite wooden, brick, and stone carvings, inspiring a singular nostalgia for the remote past.

My friends all know of my enthusiasm for historic villages. Wrapped in its morning haze, Chengkan has become another entry in my memory. Everything seemed so familiar that I imagined I resided there for ages. There, the old-fashioned residences complementing wild marguerites blooming in the courtyards reminded me that it's not just a dream, and that ancient Anhui is still a reality.



Weeds take root in cracks of a stone pagoda at the entrance of Chengkan Village.

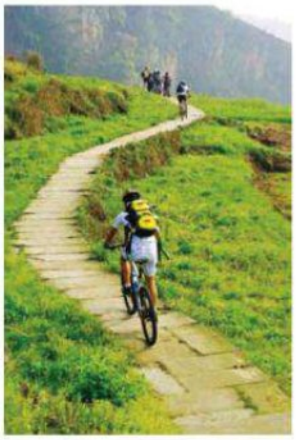


RIDING HIGH

Text and photographs by Zi Xu

Pedaling against the cool spring breeze carrying the fragrance of wild canola flowers, teams of cyclists glide through zigzagging mountain paths, adding a peculiar attraction to the already breathtaking March scenery in the southwestern province of Sichuan.

Arduous trekking is part of the fun of mountain biking.



Jianwei, an agriculture-based mountain county in Sichuan, has lured outside eyes because of its preservation of the world's only operational rails for old-fashioned narrow-gauge steam locomotives, which have been pushing development of local tourism. The steam locomotive is now considered a "living fossil of the industrial revolution," and although the rail in Jianwei was originally constructed for coal transportation, it now primarily moves passengers. In recent years, fascinated by its reputation, numerous train enthusiasts both from home and abroad have visited. In 2006, the county government dubbed the railway an industrial heritage to be protected.

While delighting in the locomotive and soaking up the beautiful surrounding landscapes, many travelers also realized that the winding roads and paths seemed ideal for mountain biking. According to a tourist bus driver, increasing numbers of cyclists have been visiting, including many who pedaled from outside the county just to see the locomotives.

Mr. Wang, 26, and his five friends came from Chengdu, capital of Sichuan Province, with their bicycles. Their plan was to spend a weekend riding through the picturesque scenery. "The bicycle is not just an exercise device, it has also become a symbol of a fashionable and green lifestyle," Wang asserts. "We all love cycling through the suburbs, which has become our favorite holiday activity."

Wang frequents cycling websites to stay current on the hobby. "I'm now preparing to co-found a cycling club with my friends," he reveals. "Today, if you search for 'leisure cycling' on the net, you'll get tens of thousands of pages from cycling clubs and myriad forum posts about the sport. Cycling gives you a feeling of freedom and allows you to ride to any destination while enjoying the view en route and even making new friends."

Mountain bikers in Jianwei often find it hard to forget the enchanting golden canola blossoms as they race through the mountains. The bright hue of the flower is so appealing that it has been known to drive away depression and other negative effects of months of chilly winter weather, making the otherwise ordinary oil-producing flower almost synonymous with spring. Unlike most other places where the canola blooms in flat fields, Jianwei's flowers grow in narrow mountainside patches, composing a singular beauty that can be appreciated by adventure seekers on pedals.

Posing with the preserved steam locomotive in Jianwei.

Travel Tips

How to Get There:

Visitors bound for Jianwei can take a coach from Chengdu, which usually takes three to four hours. To experience the steam locomotive rails, tourists can board the train from any of its eight stops and four sightseeing stations at four different times: 6:00, 9:30, 14:00, and 17:30. During holidays, two or three additional sightseeing trains roll across the rails.

Bonus Tip:

Energy-draining treks along uneven paths require mountain bikers to drink water and rest regularly. Local abundant hot springs can ensure physical and mental refreshment after a journey.

Bicycle rental is available locally.

The annual Golden Lens awards have evolved into the most prestigious national photojournalism contest in China. Entering its 18th consecutive year, the contest already attracted the best work of photojournalists from every media outlet across the country.

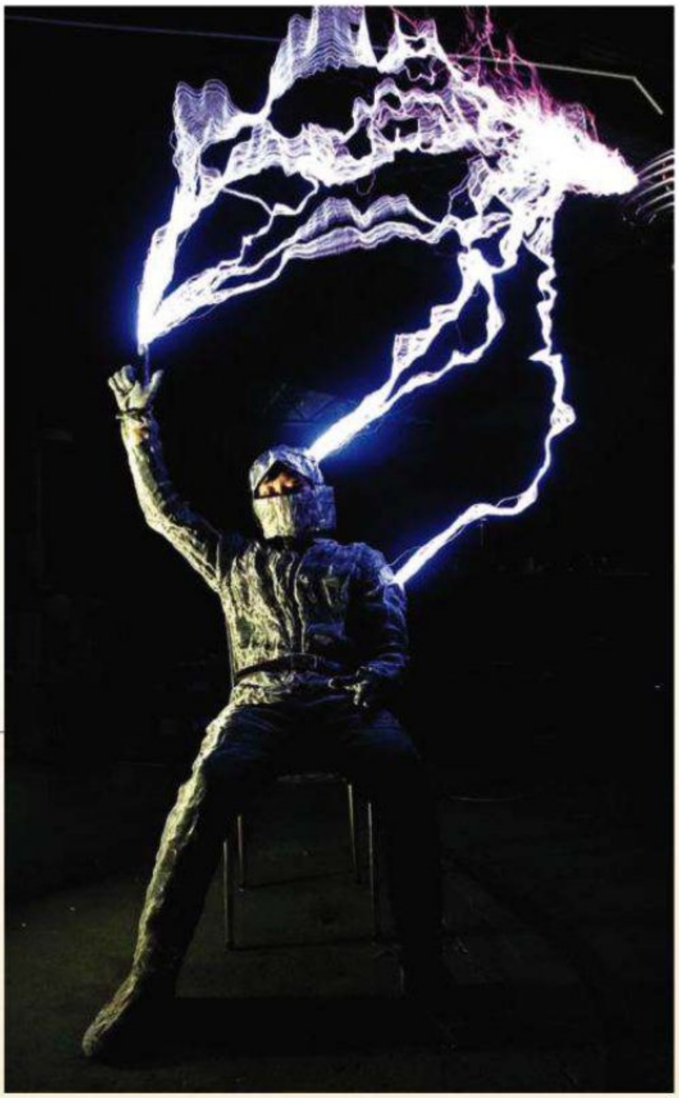
The winners of 2010 were announced on January 21, 2011, singling out the best of the best from more than 2,000 participating photographers who contributed over 22,800 individual photos.

Single images as well as series were welcomed, and first, second, and third prizes were awarded in nine categories: spot news, news, newsmakers, economy/science/technology, arts & culture, daily life, sports, nature/environmental protection, and creative photography.

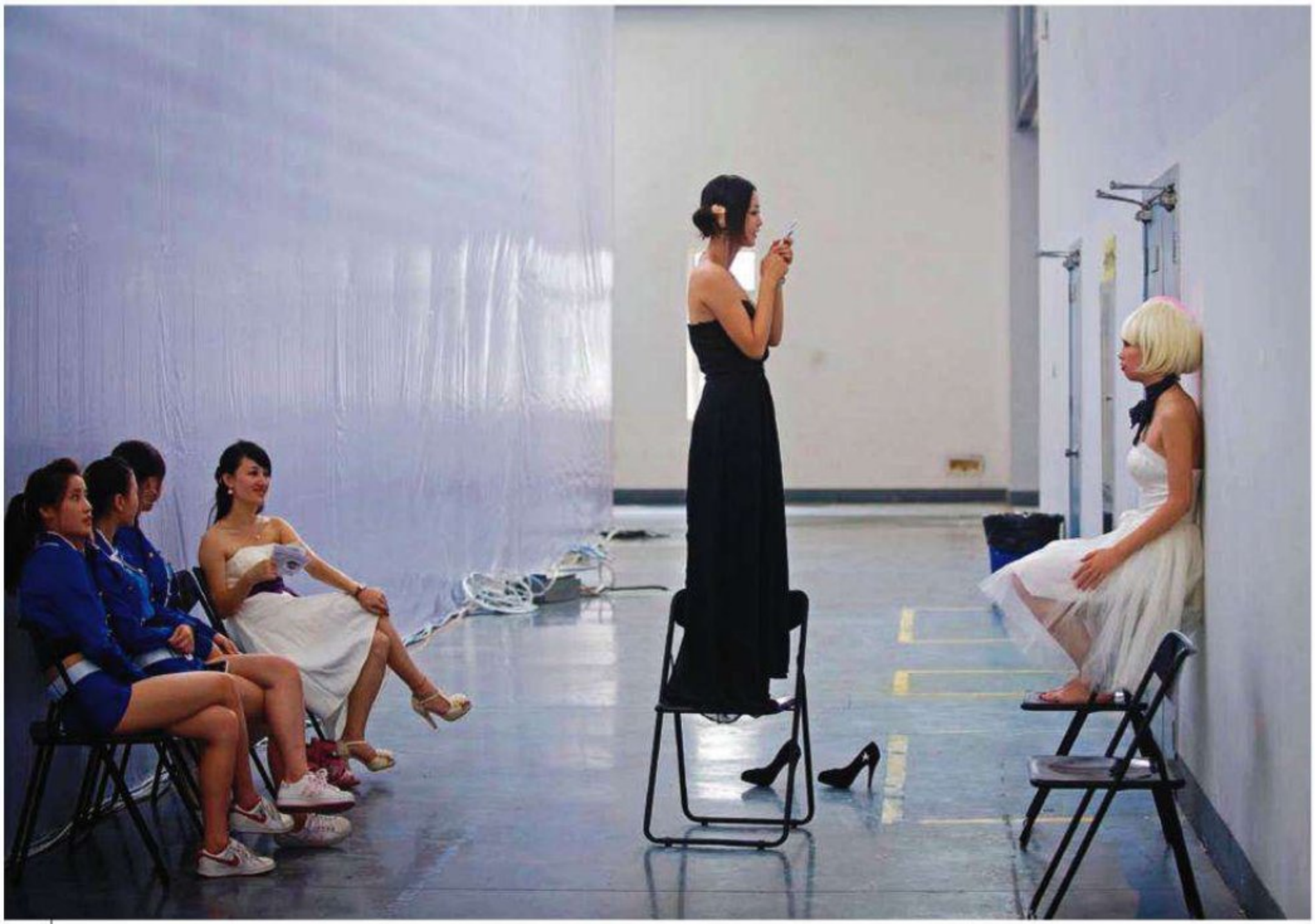
Golden Lenses

China's Best News Photographs of 2010

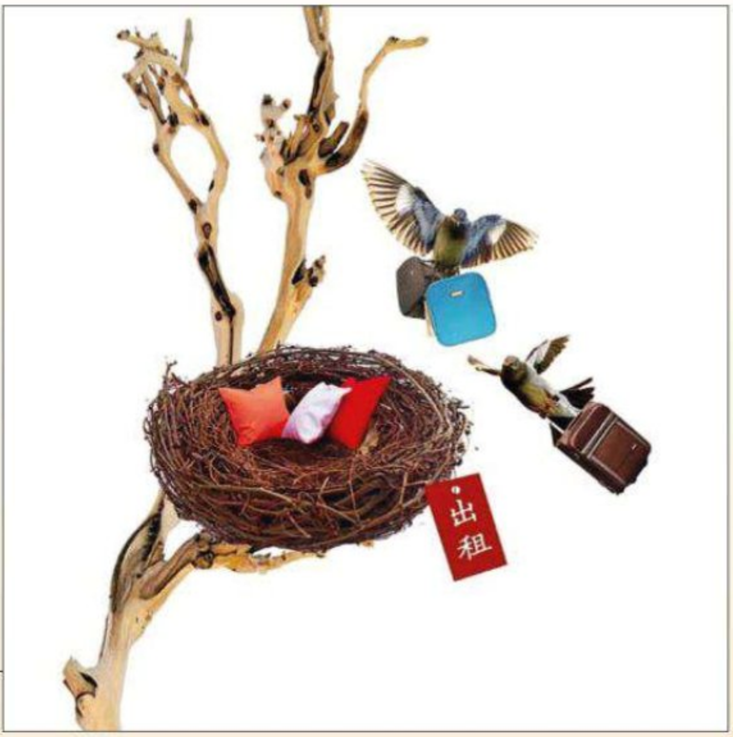
Text by Wang Dongmei



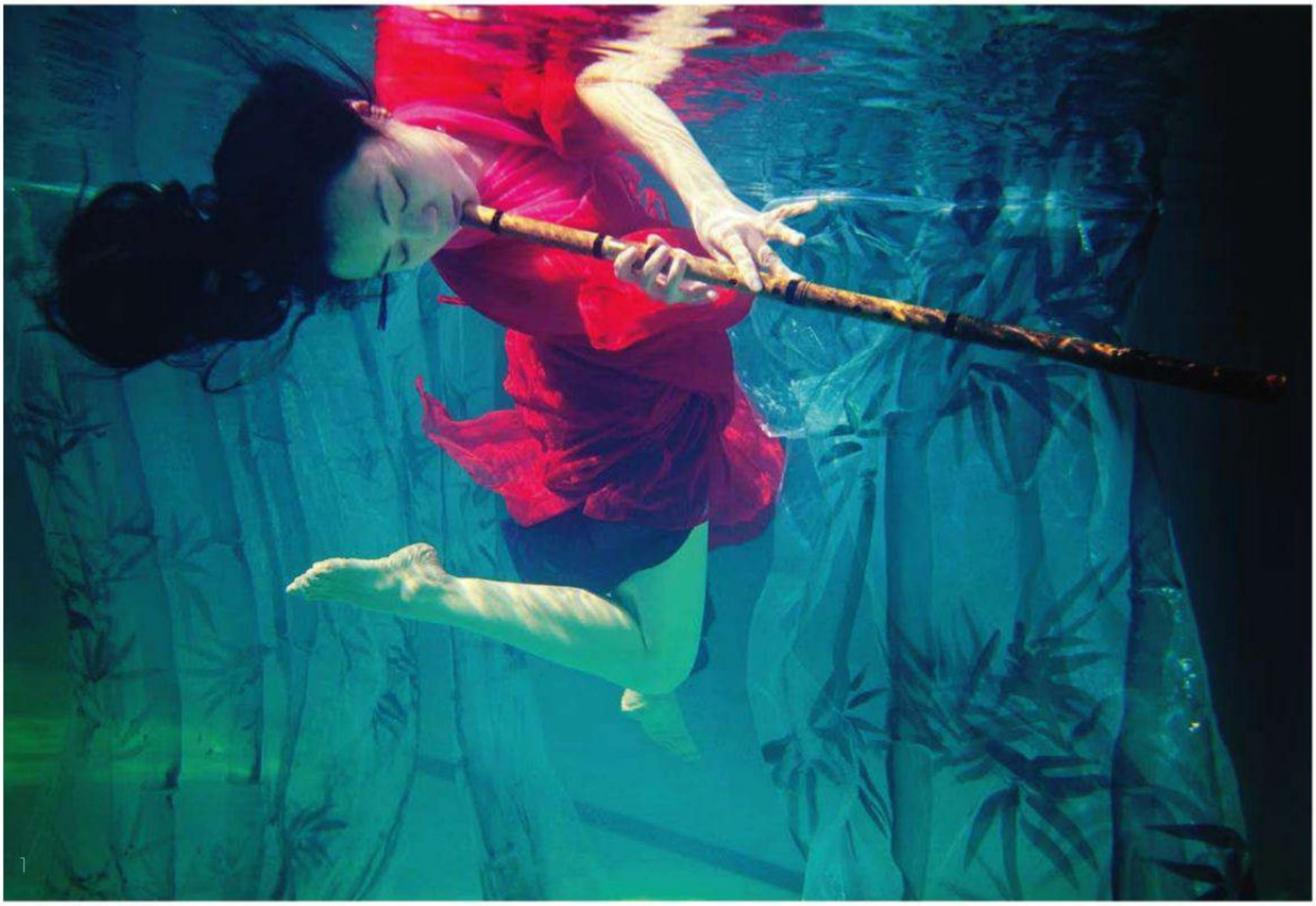
Cheng Jiang placed 2nd in the Economy, Science, and Technology Singles category with this picture, *Touching High Voltage*. **Background:** On December 31, 2010, Lu Yulong, a high school student from Shenzhen, Guangdong, invented a 500-kilovolt static device. He touched the high-voltage arc to experiment with lightning.



Chen Zhongqiu took the top prize in the Arts & Culture Singles category with this picture, *Another Side of Car Models.*
Background: On August 28, 2010, at the Ningbo International Car Fair, 24-year-old model Zi Xuan stood on a chair, taking photos with her mobile phone for her friend during a break.



Wang Yuanzheng won 1st Prize in the Creative Photography Singles category with this picture, *Young Man, Renting Happily!*
Background: For many young people, renting a house is only a stepping stone. Nevertheless, with pressure of rising housing prices in big cities, many young people prefer to rent so that they avoid becoming a "mortgage slave," thus leaving more freedom for choice related to their life and career.



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Zhu Xiyong placed 3rd in the Arts & Culture Series category with these pictures, *Chinese Yoga in Water.*

Background: On October 20, 2010, Peng Zixuan from Wuhan, Hubei, danced with fish while showcasing her creative aquatic Chinese-style yoga. Peng learned techniques for floating from her father when she was a child. After water yoga was introduced to China a few years ago, she began adapting it to floating, creating a unique way to exercise, known as "Chinese water yoga," which soon became popular.

1. Water Flute
2. Reading Bamboo Strips under Water
3. Dancing with Fish
4. Playing with the *Zheng*
5. Ten-Meter Blossom Fan
6. Painting Spring and Autumn
7. Chinese Dragon Dance
8. Ink Lotus

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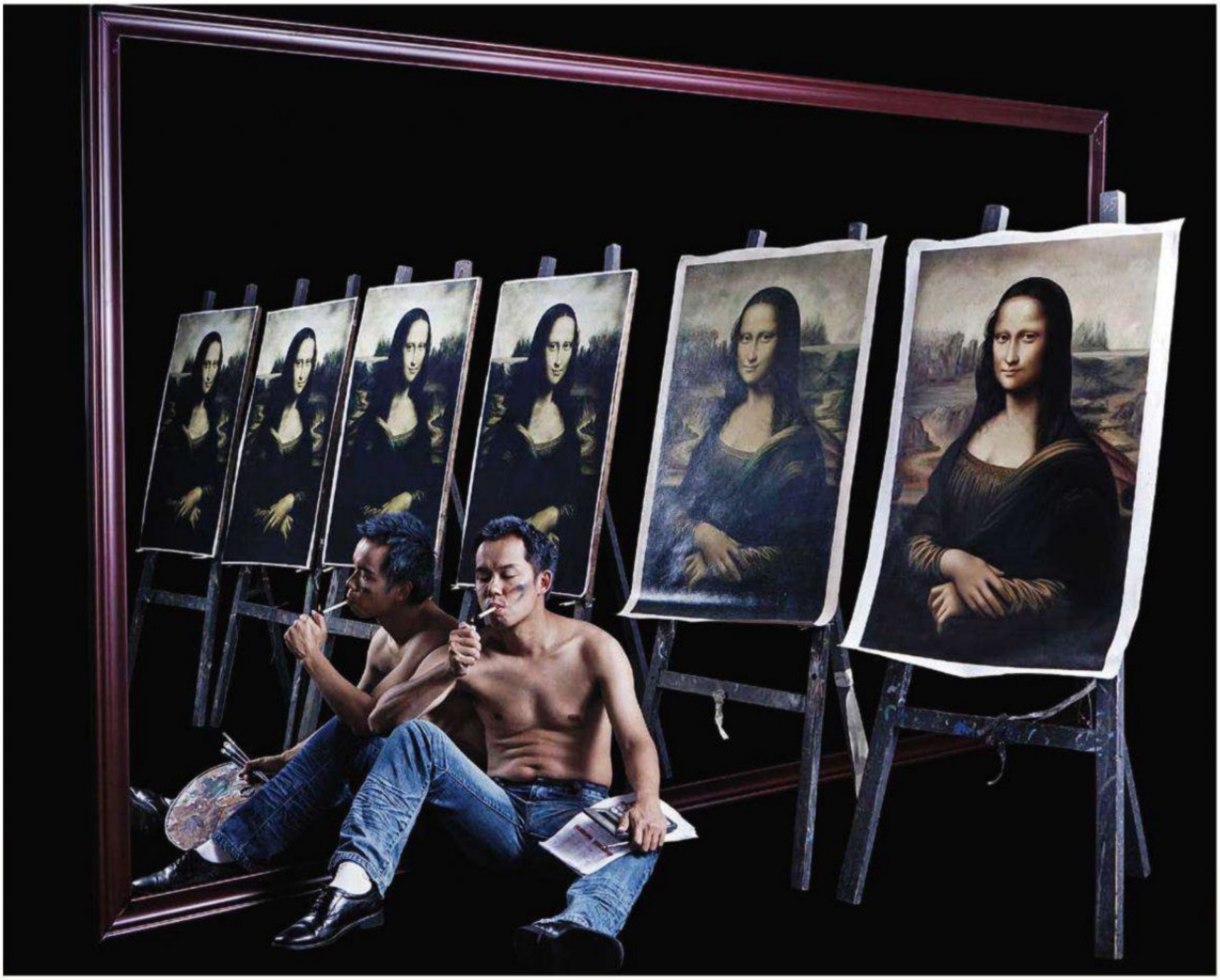
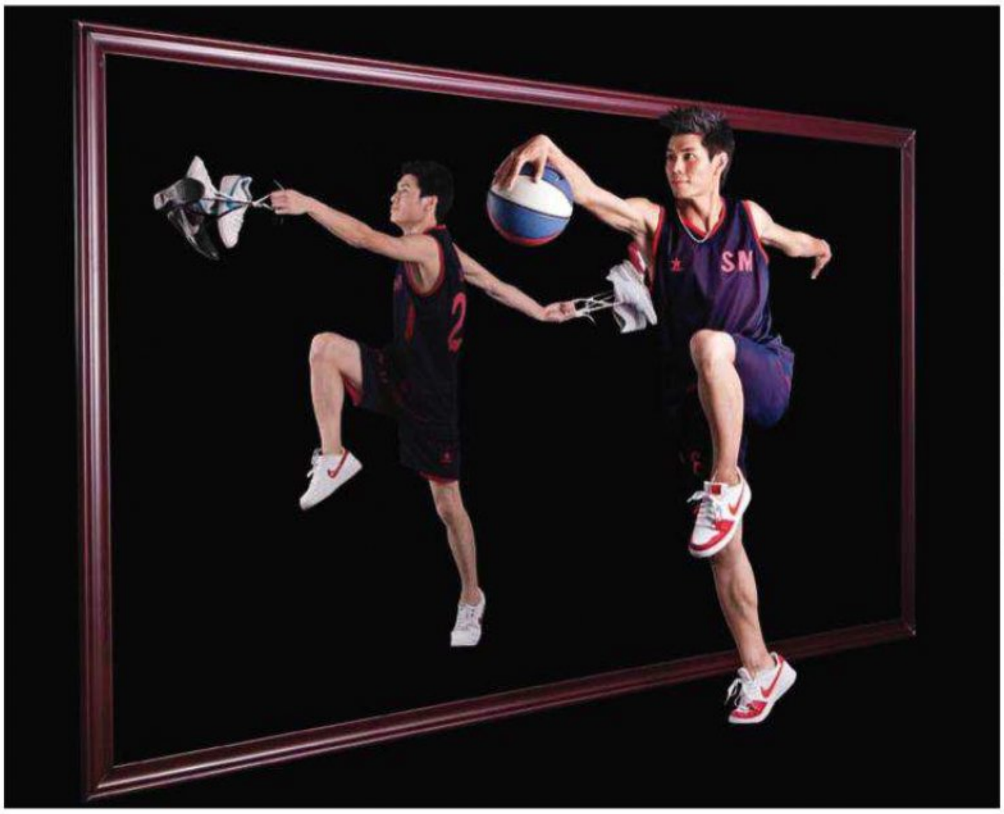


Wu Junsong was awarded the top prize in the Creative Photography Series category with this picture, *The Life of Cheap Copy.* **Background:** Today in China, the term *shanzhai*, meaning "cheap copy" or "knock-off," is commonly used to replace words meaning "fake," "duplication," or "clone."



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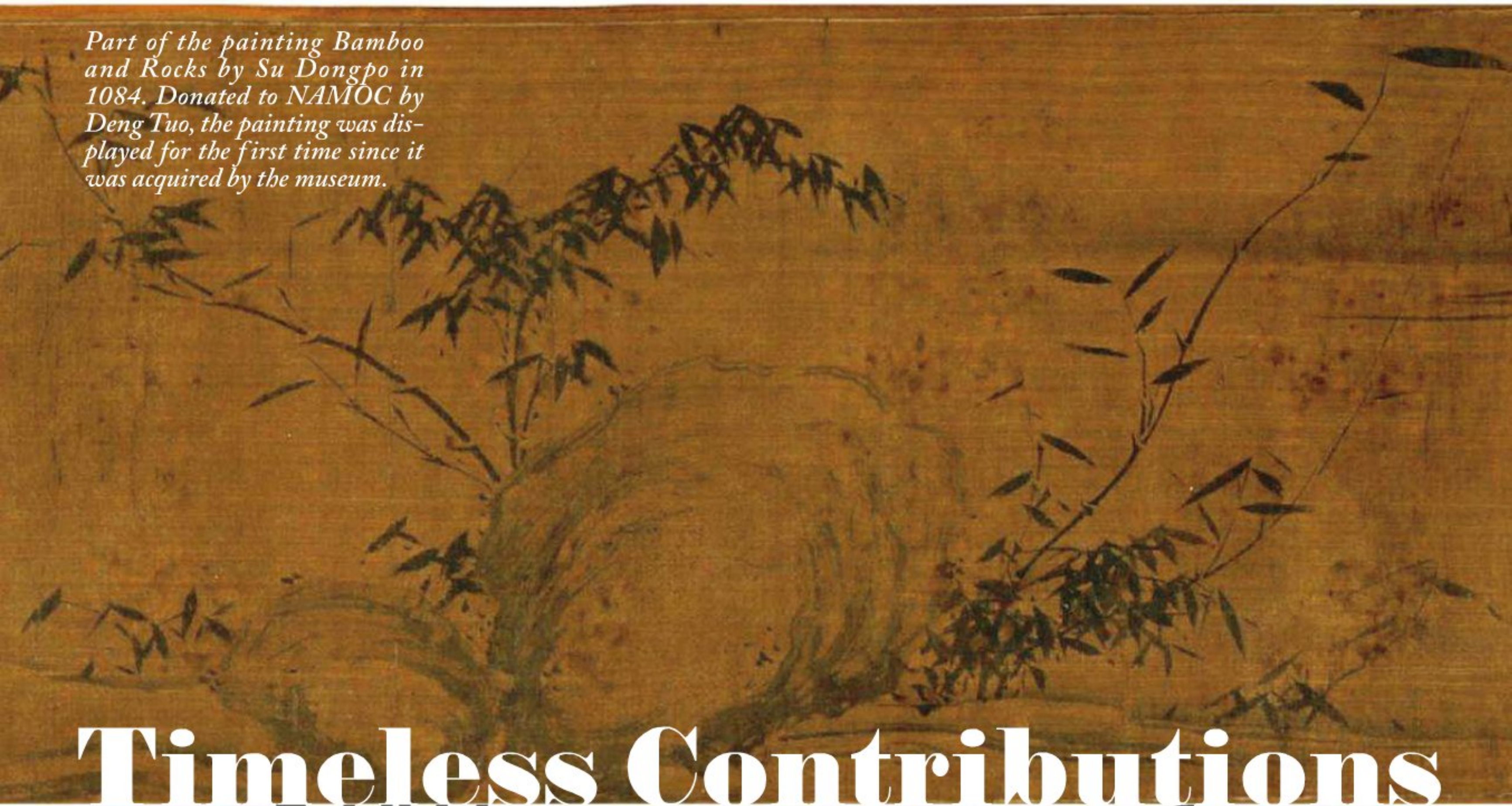
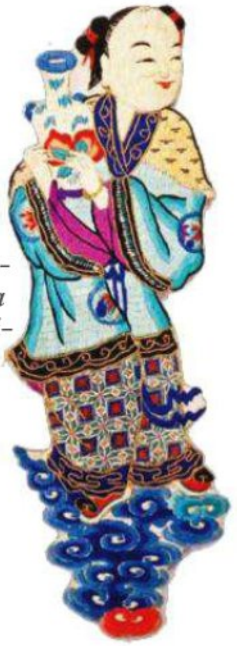


Part of the painting Bamboo and Rocks by Su Dongpo in 1084. Donated to NAMOC by Deng Tuo, the painting was displayed for the first time since it was acquired by the museum.

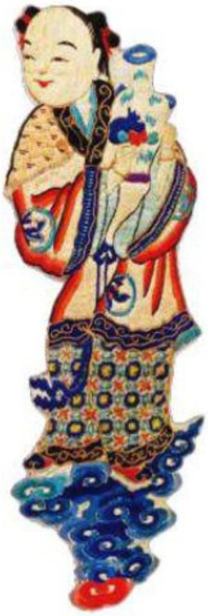
Timeless Contributions

Exhibition of Donations to the National Art Museum

Text by Wang Shijie

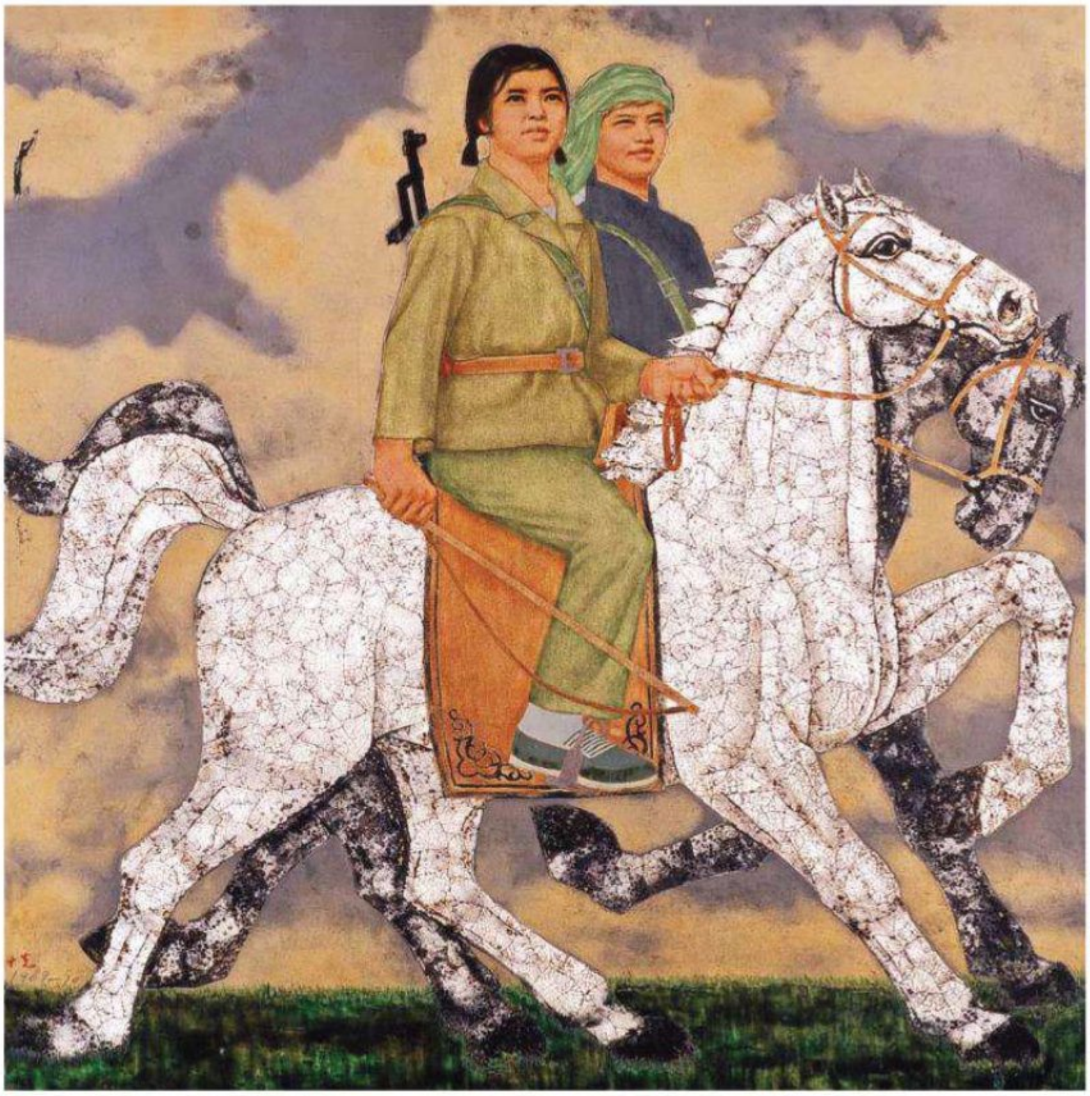


Holding Vases in Hand, *a classic embroidery donated by Shen Pu.*

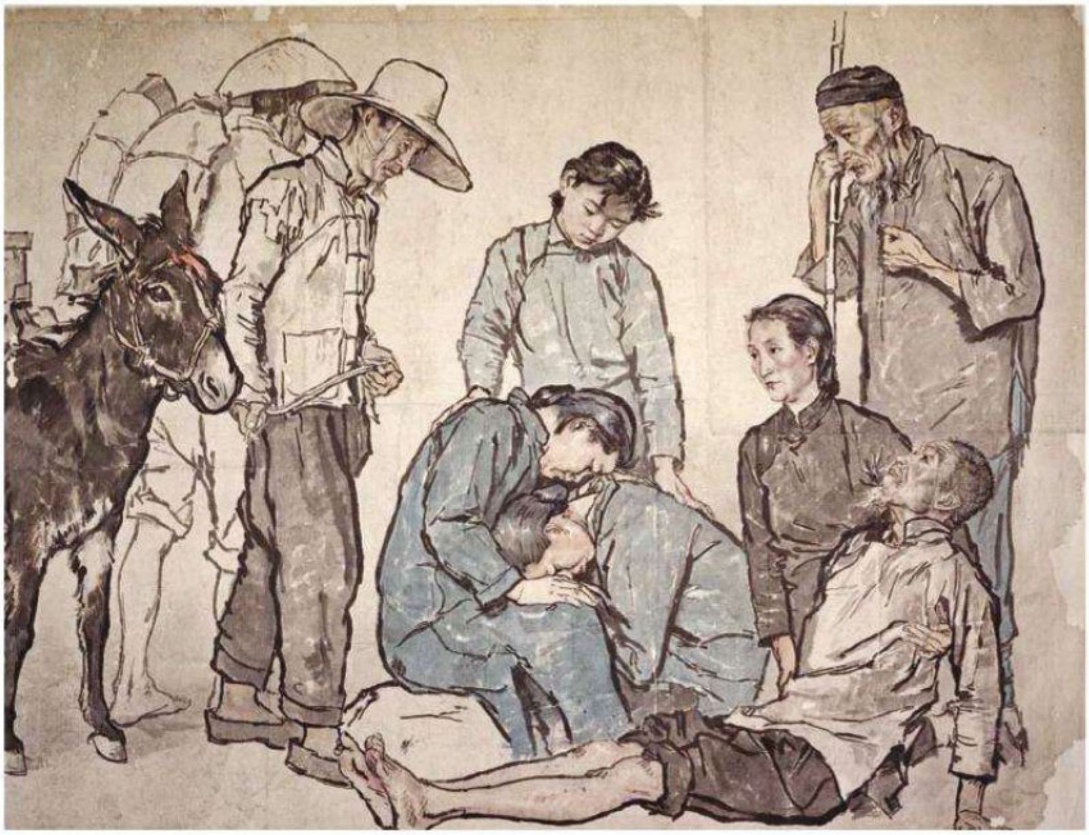


During Spring Festival 2011, the National Art Museum of China (NAMOC) offered an irresistible promotion. The venerable museum charged no admission during the holiday for patrons to view an exhibition of five decades of acquisitions, which attracted more than 10,000 visitors daily. Covering 21 halls, the exhibition included more than 800 individual works contributed by 89 donors, spanning a wide range of genres including traditional Chinese paintings, oil paintings, prints, sculpture, sketches, cartoons, and folk art. The collection was comprehensive and mesmerizing, with pieces ranging from the Song Dynasty (960-1279) to today. As the first capsulated representation of NAMOC's collection, the unprecedented exhibition displayed classics donated to the museum since 1961, when it first opened.

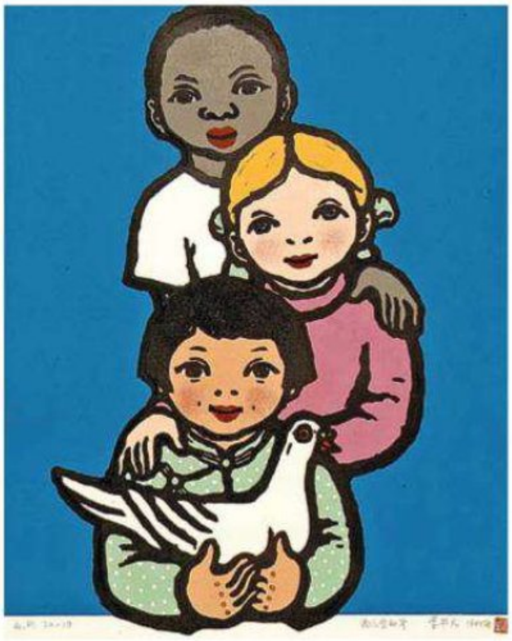
Deng Tuo's children pose for a picture with their father's donations.



New Soldiers on the Grassland *by Qiao Shiguang, donated to the museum by the painter.*



The wash painting **Refugees** *was created by Jiang Zhaohe in 1943 and later donated to NAMOC by the artist. Its realistic expression left a profound influence on Chinese art circles.*



Print We Want Peace *by Li Pingfan, donated by the artist.*

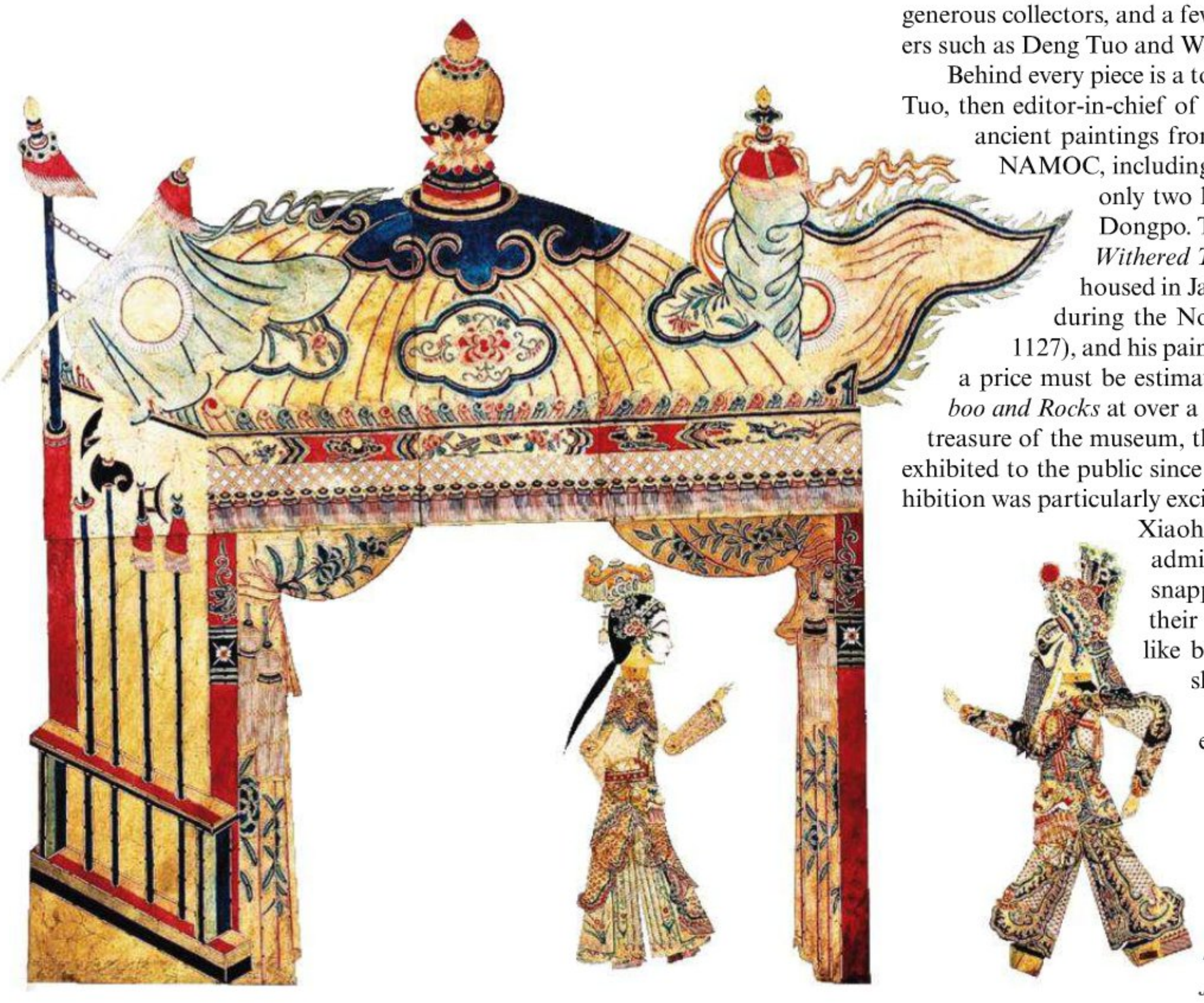
For public museums, donation from artists and their families remain one of the most crucial methods of acquisition. Since its founding, NAMOC has always attached great importance on strengthening its collection. In 1961, the museum formed a special acquisition team dedicated to collection and research. Their first group of acquisitions was primarily comprised of contemporary printmaking along with 18 traditional paintings from three renowned contemporary Chinese artists, namely Shi Lu, Lin Fengmian, and Fu Baosh, each contributing six pieces. Donations from the past half century number greater than 10,000, but those displayed in this exhibition accounted for less than 10 percent of the total collection.

One singular characteristic of the exhibition was its highlight on donors. The opening ceremony lacked a podium, while Chinese Culture Minister Cai Wu sat with donors and their families. Instead of a fancy ribbon-cutting ceremony, the minister and Zou Peizhu, widow of venerable painter Li Keran, lifted the curtain for the exhibition while expressing special gratitude to the donors.

Works were arranged according to the year they were donated to the museum. A brief introduction and portrait of its donor accompanied each piece, helping visitors better understand the person. While some works were donated by the artists themselves, others were willed to the museum upon the donor's death, some came from generous collectors, and a few were acquired by researchers such as Deng Tuo and Wang Shucun.

Behind every piece is a touching story. In 1964, Deng Tuo, then editor-in-chief of *People's Daily*, donated 145 ancient paintings from his personal collection to NAMOC, including *Bamboo and Rocks*, one of only two known existing pieces by Su Dongpo. The other surviving painting, *Withered Tree and Queer Rock*, is now housed in Japan. Su was a man of letters during the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127), and his paintings are priceless. But when a price must be estimated, appraisers valued *Bamboo and Rocks* at over a billion yuan. As the greatest treasure of the museum, the painting was never before exhibited to the public since it was acquired. So, this exhibition was particularly exciting for Deng's family. Deng Xiaohong, his youngest daughter, admitted that all of her siblings snapped plenty of pictures of their father's donations. "It was like being with my father again," she remarked.

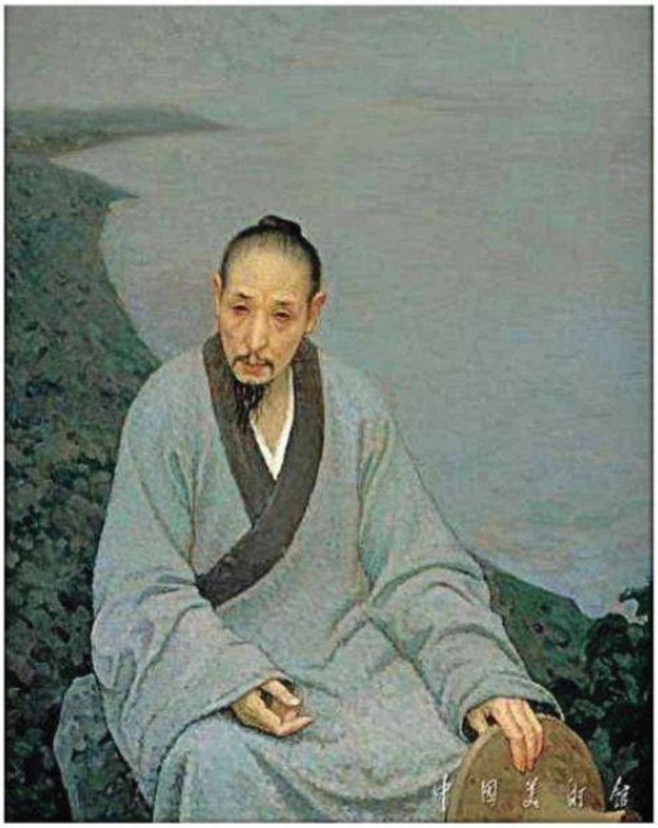
During the opening ceremony, Fan Di'an, curator of



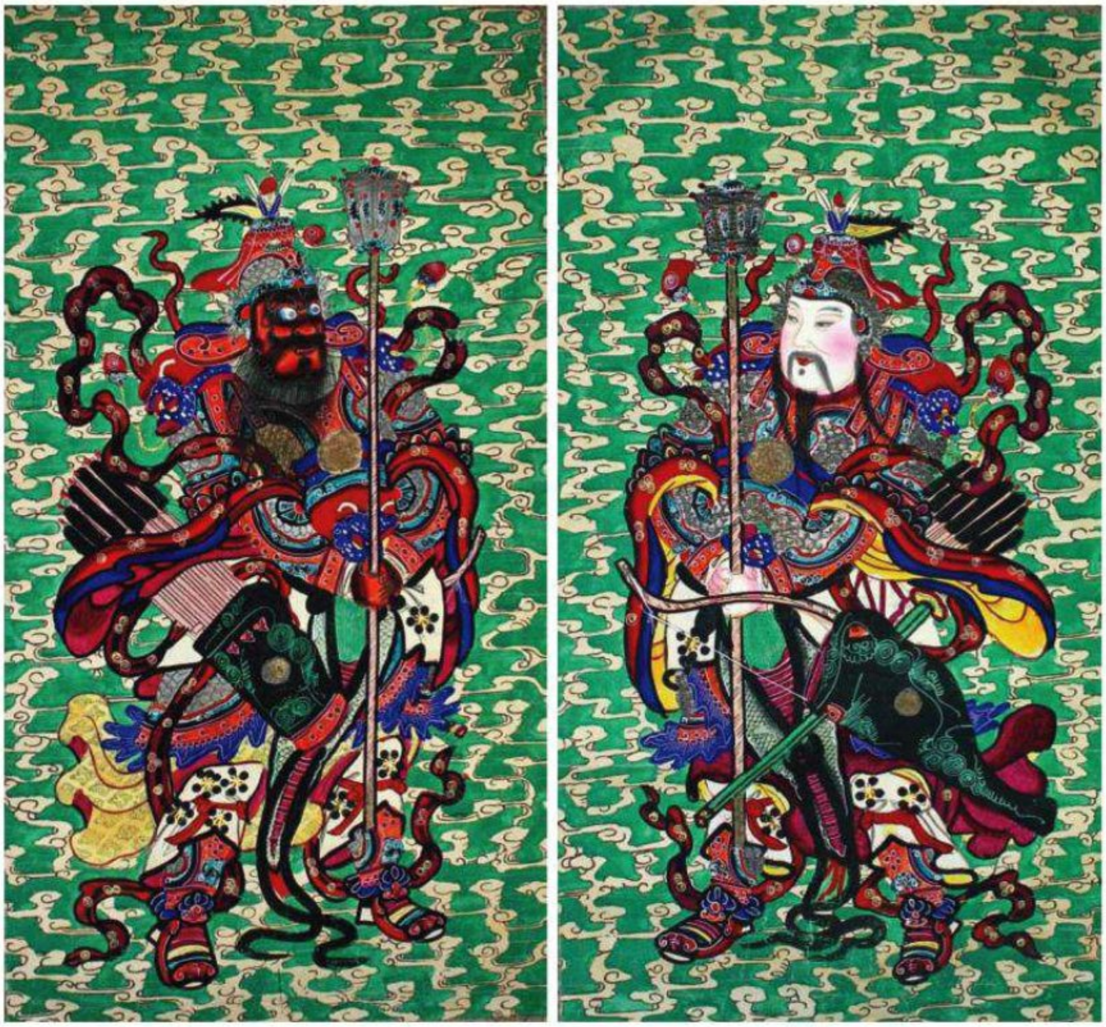
Shadow puppets by Liu Jilin, donated by the artist.

NAMOC, expressed sincere thanks to supporters of the museum. Fan illustrated that unselfish contributions from donors guarantee the artistic value of the museum's collection. In recent years when certain artists realized their worth had skyrocketed on the open market, many (such as Wu Guanzhong, Jin Shangyi, and Zhu Dequn) still chose to donate to the museum. When deceased artists leave relatively few works, prices can jump even higher. However, their families still retain the right to donate. For these reasons, the exhibition was named "Unselfish Donations and Timeless Contributions." "We should thank every donor for their unselfish contributions," stressed the curator. "Without their meticulous collection and preservation, many works would have been lost during the passage of time. Their donations transform the work into protected public cultural wealth, which can be enjoyed by every ordinary person."

Fan concluded by noting that the exhibition was only a small fraction of the total donations to the museum. In the future, they plan to present more exhibitions including international donations and organize an exhibition tour around the country. Critics will be invited to conduct in-depth research, with an aim at increasing awareness of the precious donations and enhancing the Chinese public's aesthetic taste in arts and entertainment.



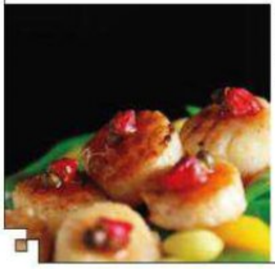
Oil painting **Painter Zhu Da** *by Jin Shangyi, donated by the artist.*



Yangliuqing Woodblock New Year picture **Door Gods on Green Clouds** *from the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911).*

Tea and River Treats at Summer Palace in China World Hotel, Beijing

In a graceful nod to centuries of Chinese tea tradition, Summer Palace showcases an innovative twist on Huaiyang and Cantonese cuisines this spring as our chefs des cuisine present a menu of tea-based specialities such as Sautéed Shrimps with Longjing Tea, Braised Minced Chicken with Chrysanthemum Petals and Braised Black-bone Chicken with Crushed Pu'er Tea. Pair your meal with a pot of freshly brewed tea. Alongside tea treats, savour the soft, velvety texture of Yangzhou catfish, herring and yellow croaker in a menu of authentic dishes by Huaiyang Chef Hou Xin Qing.



For reservations, please call (86 10)6505 2266 ext. 34.

Two More Accolades for Sofitel Forebase Chongqing

2010 Annual Travel Awards & 9th Anniversary Celebration of Travel & Leisure Magazine was held at Beijing on 18:00 of Jan 20th 2011. 2010 Annual Travel Awards is organized and held by Travel & Leisure Magazine. Sofitel Forebase Chongqing has been awarded with the honorable title" Best Business Hotels in the Greater China Region 2010" for excellence in food, décor and service.

Almost at the same time, Sofitel Forebase Chongqing was awarded the "Best Travel Service Hotel" by <Voyage> magazine.

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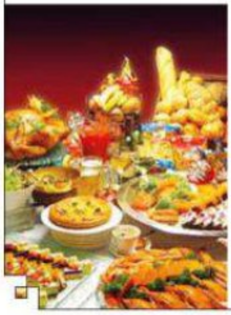
Petrus French Restaurant Awarded "The Best French Restaurant" By Modern Weekly Best Restaurants Awards 2010

Legendale Hotel Beijing Petrus French Restaurant has been awarded "The Best French Restaurant" by Modern Weekly Best Restaurants Awards 2010. Mr. Patrick Perie, Executive Chef of Petrus French Restaurant (right) and Mr. Glen Gao, Petrus French Restaurant Manager (left) received the award at the 8th Annual Ceremony held in Beijing.

Oasis Coffee Shop International Food Collection!

Enjoy Oasis Coffee Shop great value with one of the benefit buffet selection in Beijing featuring more than 100 different dishes including salads, seafood, beef, sushi, pastas, hot dishes and desserts with unlimited beer, soft drinks, coffee and tea.
Lunch: RMB 118.00 net per person
Dinner: RMB 148.00 net per person
Pay four get one free (dinner only).
Lunch: 11:30am-2:00pm (Mon.-Fri.), 11:30am-2:30pm (Sat.-Sun.)



Dinner: 5:30-10:00pm
Not applicable to any discount program or cash vouchers
Venue: Oasis Coffee Shop, 1st floor, Holiday Inn Beijing Downtown
Tel: (86 10) 68338822 ext. 7116

Hilton Beijing Wangfujing Presents the Wonders of Huaiyang Cuisine

The award-winning theatrical Chynna restaurant at Hilton Beijing Wangfujing reveals the wonders of Huaiyang cuisine from February 28 to March 6, 2011 featuring guest Huaiyang master chef John Xiao. Special set menus of "Wonders of Huaiyang Cuisine" are available from RMB 288 to RMB 488 (+ 15% service charge) for lunch and dinner at Chynna restaurant located on level 5 of Hilton Beijing Wangfujing. For more information and to make a reservation, please call Hilton Beijing Wangfujing at Tel (86 10)58128888 ext. 8411 or send an email to wangfujing@hilton.com

Spring Essential at the Spa of Hilton Beijing Wangfujing

Restore inner balance and uplift your spirit at The Spa of Hilton Beijing Wangfujing.
Indulge in "Spring Essentials" spa package with a Rebalance Body Wrap or Traditional Chinese Therapy (90 minutes) for a special package price of RMB 780 + 15% per person (regular price is RMB 1,060 + 15%) available from February 1 until April 30, 2011.
For more information and to make a reservation, please call Tel (86 10) 5812 8888 ext. 8560. The Spa at Hilton Beijing Wangfujing is located on the 6th floor, and is open 7 days a week from 10:00 am – 11:00 pm. Hilton Beijing Wangfujing is located at 8 Wangfujing East Street, Dongcheng, Beijing.

Damir Raab appointed General Manager @ Crowne Plaza Beijing Zhongguancun

Damir Raab has been appointed as General Manager of the Crowne Plaza Beijing Zhongguancun. Mr Raab, a Austrian national, brings to Crowne Plaza Beijing Zhongguancun extensive global expertise in running five-star hotels and resorts. Prior to that, he was Executive Assistant Manager of Holiday Inn Beijing Central Plaza and has worked for IHG for the past 8 years. In his leisure time, Damir enjoys motor bike, squash, golf and spending quality time with his family.

Crowne Plaza Beijing Zhongguancun is located in the heart of bustling Zhongguancun, often referred to as China's Silicon Valley. More than an outstanding location, the hotel offers stylish guest rooms, professional services and extensive meeting and banquet facilities, all within a relaxing ambiance.

Swissotel Beijing Celebrates it 20th Birthday

This is the year the Swissôtel Beijing turns 20 years young. The venture which started out with a dream in 1991, has clearly blossomed into a distinguished, internationally renowned 5 star hotel, enjoyed globally by business & leisure travelers alike.

In a joint statement from Mr. Meinhard Huck, President of Swissôtel Hotels & Resorts, Mr. Stephen Hsu, Executive Director/ General Manager of Hong Kong Macau Center Limited and Mr. Jack Breisacher, General Manager of Swissôtel Beijing, each congratulated the success borne of the dedicated team past and present that together brought the hotel to where it is today.

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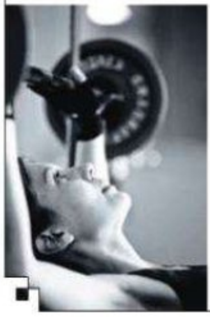

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The view of Xianshui Rock

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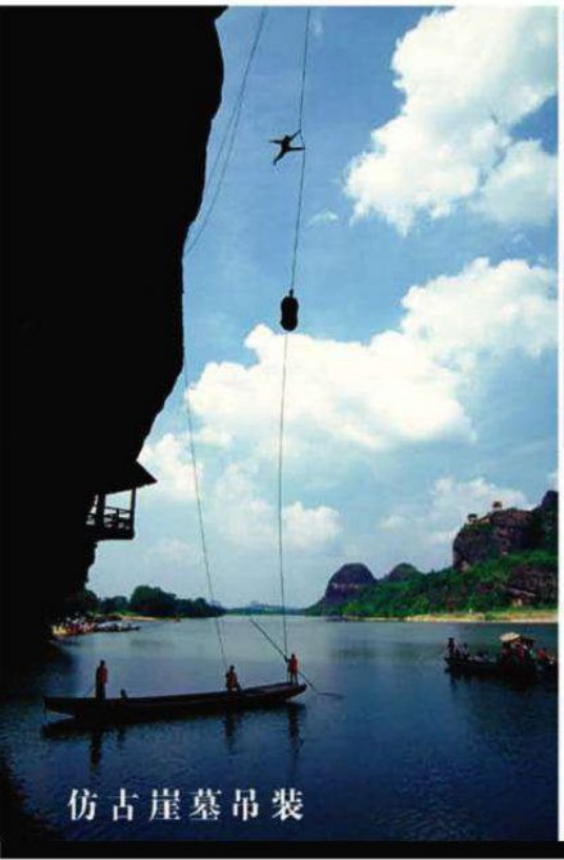
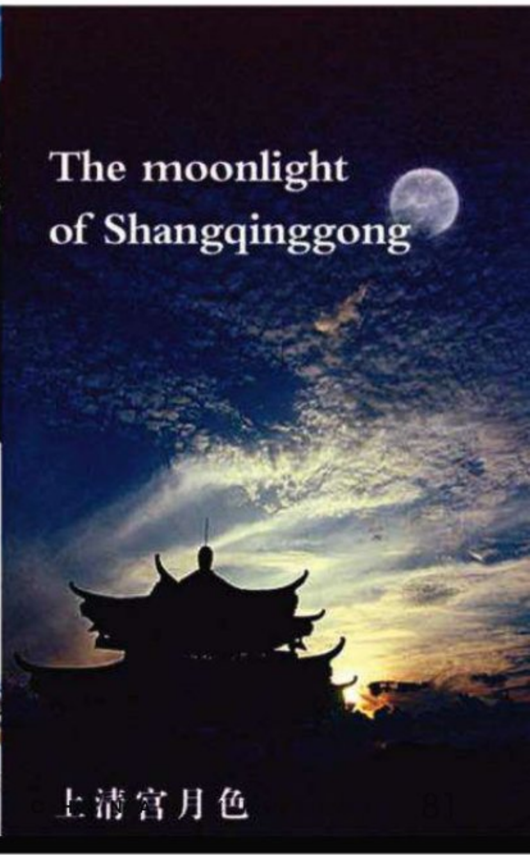


仿古崖墓吊装

Taoist Temple 山顶道观

The new tourist centre
新游客中心



The moonlight of Shangqinggong

上清宫月色

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